

Brandeis University

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Tourists, Travelers, and Citizens: Jewish Engagement of Young Adults in Four Centers of North American Jewish Life

Fern Chertok
Theodore Sasson
Leonard Saxe

with
Charles Kadushin
Dana Selinger-Abutbul
Shahar Hecht
Tobin Belzer
Randal Schnoor
Matthew Boxer



Cohen Center
for Modern Jewish Studies

March 2009

© 2009 Brandeis University

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Additional copies of this publication are available from:

Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies

Brandeis University

Mailstop 014

Waltham, MA 02454-9110

781.736.2060

www.brandeis.edu/cmjs

Acknowledgments

Support for this study was provided by the Jim Joseph Foundation in partnership with the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, UJA-Federation of New York, the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. We thank Chip Edelsberg, Sandy Edwards, and Adene Sacks at the Jim Joseph Foundation for their support and advice throughout the project. We also express appreciation to Ari Kelman, who provided invaluable assistance in our study of the San Francisco community; and our Brandeis colleagues, Joshua Tobias, Noa Milman, Deborah Grant, Masha Lokshin, and Graham Wright who contributed to the development and administration of data collection and the report. We also thank Leah Skahen for preparing the maps, as well as our summer and fall 2008 interns, Ariel Sternberg, Amy Schultz, Molly Arsenault, Yuli Almozlino, Ariel Weiser, Gillian Richter, Dan Soley, Shira Androphy, and Ari Abelman who transcribed interviews and organized our field notes. We wish to thank David Mittelberg for his review of an earlier version of this report. We are particularly appreciative of the many ways in which our work was made possible by the assistance of the administrators and staff of all of the organizations and programs for young adults who opened their doors to us. We also owe a great thanks to all of the Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni who agreed to be interviewed and responded to our requests for information. Finally, we are appreciative for the opportunity provided to us by Taglit-Birthright Israel to be involved in the study of program alumni. In particular, thanks go to Barry Chazan, Shimshon Shoshani, Gidi Mark and the entire Taglit-Birthright Israel professional staff, as well as the staff of Birthright Israel NEXT, in particular, Daniel Brenner.

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables	iv
Executive Summary	1
Introduction.....	5
Methods.....	9
<i>Key Informant Interviews</i>	9
<i>Focus Groups</i>	9
<i>Online Surveys</i>	10
Programs and Engagement	11
<i>Overall Levels of Engagement</i>	12
<i>Desired Levels of Engagement</i>	14
Obstacles and Opportunities	17
<i>Meeting Places, not “Meat Markets”</i>	18
<i>Intellectual and Cultural Experiences</i>	21
<i>Immersive and Israel-related Experiences</i>	23
<i>Accessible, Proximate, and Well-Timed Activities</i>	24
<i>Portrait of Alumni</i>	25
Implications: Equipping Travelers, Empowering Citizens.....	27
Notes	31
References	33
Appendix A: Landscape of Opportunities and Engagement by City	35
<i>New York City</i>	35
<i>San Francisco</i>	38
<i>Los Angeles</i>	40
<i>Toronto</i>	43
Appendix B: Local Organizations and Programs	47
<i>New York City Programs</i>	47
<i>San Francisco Programs</i>	49
<i>Los Angeles Programs</i>	50
<i>Toronto Programs</i>	51
Appendix C: Maps of Programs and Populations by City.....	53
<i>New York City Map</i>	53
<i>San Francisco Map</i>	54
<i>Los Angeles Map</i>	55
<i>Toronto Map</i>	56
Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol.....	57

List of Figures and Tables

Table 1: Eligible Study Participants by City	9
Figure 1: Level of Participation Since Return	12
Figure 2: Percentage Participating in a Single Program “A Lot”	13
Table 2: Participation in Birthright Israel NEXT Programming	14
Figure 3: Interest in Greater Jewish Involvement	15
Figure 4: Salience of Jewish Identity	18
Figure 5: Logistical Barriers to Participation	24
Figure 6: New York City Programs and Alumni Population	26
Table A1: New York City Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations	36
Figure A1: New York Level of Participation Since Return	37
Table A2: San Francisco Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations	38
Figure A2: San Francisco Level of Participation Since Return	39
Table A3: Los Angeles Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations	40
Figure A3: Los Angeles Level of Participation Since Return	42
Table A4: Toronto Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations	43
Figure A4: Toronto Level of Participation Since Return	45

Executive Summary

Contemporary North American Jewish young adults live in a society where Jews have achieved unprecedented social, educational, and economic success. However, with little Jewish education past their early teen years, and coming of age in an era of deferred marriage and family formation, most of these young adults go through long periods without a meaningful connection to the Jewish community. Communal concerns regarding whether the next generation of Jewish young adults would see themselves as Jews and connected to other Jews led to the creation of Taglit-Birthright Israel. Taglit's ten-day educational trips have a consistent and strong impact on participants' Jewish identities and feelings of connection to Israel and the Jewish people. The challenge now for the Jewish community is to enable alumni to translate their Taglit-inspired feelings of Jewish peoplehood and identity into meaningful engagement with Jewish life.

This study aims to understand how post-college-age Taglit alumni relate to the programs, activities, and organizations geared toward Jewish young adults and identify strategies for better meeting their needs and aspirations for Jewish involvement. Drawing on survey, focus group, and interview data, the report develops a portrait of post-college Jewish young adult life in four of the largest Jewish communities in North America: Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Toronto.

Findings

Jewish young adults, relative to other Jews, are organizationally and institutionally underserved. Especially in the post-college years, Jewish young adults often do not find

appealing and accessible ways to connect to Jewish life. Prompted in part by Taglit and affiliated organizations, this situation is changing. In the four cities studied, there has been a recent upsurge in the number and range of programs designed for young adults. In particular, each of the four cities has a partnership with Birthright Israel NEXT, a Taglit alumni association. In addition, each features educational, recreational, religious, and social action programs sponsored by synagogues, Jewish Community Centers, Federations, campus Hillels, and other non-profit organizations.

Alumni respondents to our survey reported modest levels of involvement with these programs. Just over half reported participating in such programs, most attending one or two. Most respondents characterized their level of involvement with the programs they had attended as "a little" rather than "a lot." But these young adults also made clear, both in their responses to our survey and in focus groups, that they would like to be more involved in Jewish life. Their Taglit experience showed them how intellectually stimulating and personally meaningful Jewish engagement can be and created a thirst for the types of Jewish involvement they currently seek:

Meeting Places

Young adults participate in Jewish programs less than they would like because they suspect that they do not resemble their more involved peers and/or have few Jewish friends willing to accompany them. At the same time, many alumni would like to further develop their circle of Jewish friends and pursue some of their interests in a Jewish framework. They describe their ideal setting as fun, small-scale,

and one that allows them to have ongoing contact with peers in the context of interest-based activities. What they do not want is what they colloquially refer to as “meat markets” where the explicit focus is on meeting potential mates.

Intellectual and Cultural Experiences

With limited knowledge of the rituals and choreography of Jewish observance, most Taglit alumni anticipate feeling like outsiders, uncomfortable and incompetent, in Jewish religious settings. Although many are wary of programs that explicitly focus on religious observance, they are open to programs that offer intellectual avenues for exploring their Jewish identity and heritage as well as high-quality cultural events that are specifically geared toward their age group.

Immersive and Israel-related Experiences

Most alumni have strongly positive memories of their Taglit experience and look for ways to expand their connections to the culture and people of Israel. Many alumni want opportunities to learn conversational Hebrew. Many also seek immersive experiences including, but not limited to, travel.

Policy Implications

Our findings suggest that years later most alumni continue to view Taglit as a watershed experience. It catalyzed their personal connection to the Jewish people, Israel, and their own Jewish identity. However, as post-

college-age young adults, they remain “tourists” in the Jewish communal world, sightseeing at a few programs but, overall, struggling to find ways to connect. Moreover, given their developmental stage of life, modest Jewish experiential background, and limited knowledge, most alumni are not yet ready to become full-fledged “citizens” of their Jewish communities. Accordingly, we propose an alternative model to tourism and citizenship for engaging Taglit alumni and their peers. Jewish communal strategy should encourage young adults to become “travelers” who take an active role exploring what it means for them to be Jewish in a self-directed process of discovery.

Relating to Taglit alumni and their peers as travelers will entail policies that equip young adults with the information, skills, motivation, and support needed to become active explorers of Jewish community and Jewish life. It will also entail further development of young adult programs and activities so that centers of Jewish life become rewarding sites for young adult exploration. Meaningful exploration during the young adult years is the best way to foster future citizenship. Toward this end, we offer the following suggestions:

Travelers experience more when they share the trip. Young adults need a network of friends with whom they can share their journey of Jewish discovery. Efforts should be made to foster the social network component of the Taglit experience by increasing the number of community-based trips for older participants and establishing more venues and

opportunities in home communities where alumni can get to know peers in an informal manner.

Travelers need “maps” to know where they might go.
Many young adults complain that they simply do not know what is available in their local Jewish communities. An information-rich environment can be fostered through improved communication between programs, especially between Birthright Israel NEXT entities and other local venues for Jewish life. Improved communication between programs and the young adults they wish to reach is necessary as are navigation tools that provide up-to-date programming information.

Travelers need choices in destination.
Programs and venues should serve as diverse entry points, emphasizing interest-based activities; small, intimate groups; and stimulating, challenging, and enriching content. Big parties and programs that encourage religious observance attract a few but also alienate many more and should not be the only or predominant forms of experience offered.

Not every traveler is ready for the same trip.
Many young adults with comparatively weaker Jewish educational backgrounds seek and benefit from programs, activities, and learning opportunities provided by Jewish professionals and outreach workers. Programs should be established to provide occupational

frameworks and career opportunities for high-level educators, rabbis, and community builders, especially within the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements which are underrepresented relative to the Orthodox in the field of young adult outreach.

Travelers can be guides to each other.
Taglit alumni want to develop their own young adult Jewish communities. Programs that empower young adults to “do-it-yourself” should be promoted. Even programs that are not peer initiated or led should include young adults in an advisory capacity. These are the very experiences and skills that will foster a deeper sense of ownership.

The vitality of Jewish life in North America derives in no small measure from the willingness of Jewish communities to reinvent organizations and practices to adapt to changing circumstances. Today, during the critical years for identity formation and establishment of careers and families, Jewish young adults remain largely outside of the community’s institutions. Perhaps paradoxically, our best hope for one day bringing them back inside is to shift our paradigm of young adult engagement from developing established citizens to empowering young adults to embark on their own explorations of Jewish identity, life, and community.

Introduction

A new generation of North American Jewish young adults—the grandchildren of Jews for whom the Shoah and the founding of the State of Israel were identity-shaping events—are now in their twenties and thirties. This generation of young adults lives in a society where Jews have achieved unprecedented social, educational, and economic success. They grew up in an environment free of overt anti-Semitism and had a wider variety of Jewish educational opportunities available to them than did their parents. Nevertheless, concerns regarding whether these young adults will see themselves as part of a larger Jewish people and choose to take on communal obligations loom large in today's milieu.

During much of the 20th century, young adults married and established families in their mid-twenties, and their brief hiatus from Jewish involvement during and just after college appeared as a trivial piece of the Jewish lifespan story. In recent decades, the timing and sequence of transition markers to adulthood have become less prescriptive and more variable. There has been a distinct shift toward older ages of first marriage and childbirth (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), concomitant with a higher proportion of young people seeking graduate training prior to entering the labor force (Mortimer & Larson, 2002). As Jewish young adults have increasingly deferred marriage and family formation into their thirties and beyond, what was once seen as a short vacation from the burdens of organized Jewish life has become an extended period of disconnection. Analysts of North American Jewish life increasingly wonder when or whether young adult Jews, who have been absent from organized Jewish life for a decade or more, will return to

become fully fledged citizens of the Jewish community.

Taglit-Birthright Israel was created by a coterie of Jewish leaders who, concerned about a decline in Jewish engagement, were committed to developing a large-scale effort to move this generation toward greater connection with its Jewish heritage, Israel, and the worldwide Jewish community (Saxe & Chazan, 2008). More than 150,000 young adults from North America have already participated in Taglit, and evaluation studies demonstrate that these ten-day educational trips to Israel have a consistent and strong impact on participants' Jewish identities, connections to Israel, and their feelings about being part of the Jewish people (see Saxe, Phillips, Wright, Boxer, Hecht, & Sasson, 2008; Saxe, Sasson, & Hecht, 2006; Saxe, Sasson, Phillips, Hecht, & Wright, 2007). Moreover, Taglit increases participation in Jewish activities on college campuses. The challenge now for the Jewish community is to enable post-college-age young adults, Taglit alumni in particular, to translate their Taglit-inspired feelings of Jewish peoplehood into engagement in Jewish life and the Jewish communal enterprise (Sasson, Saxe, Rosen, Selinger-Abutbul, & Hecht, 2007; Saxe, Sasson, Phillips, Hecht, & Wright, 2007).

Years after their trip, Taglit alumni continue to see that experience as a watershed moment when they realized their personal connection to the Jewish people, Israel, and their own Jewish identity. However, as post-college-age young adults, they tend to look more like “tourists” than “citizens” in the Jewish communal world and often do not find ways to connect to Jewish life. They highly value their identity but do not join Jewish

organizations, and the majority does not seek out opportunities for Jewish education or communal engagement. Although the apparent lack of involvement may reflect our inability to measure accurately Jewish engagement among young adults, there are other possible explanations. The level of young adult involvement in Jewish communal life might be limited by the constricted nature of opportunities for such participation. Like other religious communities, Jewish organizations have traditionally dedicated scant resources to programs geared toward young adults (cf. Wuthnow, 2007). Whereas a full range of institutions and programs serve Jewish children, adolescents, college students, young families, adults, and seniors, relatively few are dedicated to the years extending between college and family formation.

Alternatively, limited participation in Jewish communal life beyond the campus might be an inexorable feature of young adult development. With later ages of marriage, childbearing, and entry into the workforce, what was once a straight-line march toward adult status and identity has been extended and elaborated to include a distinct developmental stage, called emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004). Characterized by exploration and experimentation in many spheres of life, this period is also defined by a fierce defense of the right to make and change individual choices. As emerging adults explore diverse identity opportunities, they may not be ready to enact their Jewish identities through anything more than cursory “tourism.”

However, tourism and citizenship are not the only routes to Jewish community engagement. Between the two, there is another path, one that American social historian Daniel Boorstin

(1992) described as “traveling.” Tourists expect to experience interesting places but are content to be the passive recipients of a pre-determined set of sight-seeing events. By contrast, travelers seek new experiences and adventures in an active and self-directed process of discovery. While emerging adults may not be ready for the mantle of citizenship, they may well have the motivation to be travelers, proactively exploring potential avenues to Jewish engagement.

Prompted in part by Taglit, philanthropists and Jewish communal organizations have recently extended support to a growing list of programs and activities geared toward young adults. In major centers of Jewish life, organizations and programs serving young adults are an increasingly visible part of the Jewish organizational mosaic. A new organization, Birthright Israel NEXT, has also been established to specifically promote alumni activities. The contours of Jewish life in North American communities are shifting, and the implications of these changes for young adults, particularly those who have been “turned on” to their Jewish identities through Taglit, must be understood.

This study aims to understand how post-college-age Taglit alumni relate to programs, activities, and organizations geared toward Jewish young adults. Building on our earlier study of the opportunities for post-program engagement for Taglit alumni (Sasson, Saxe, Rosen, Selinger-Abutbul, & Hecht, 2007), the specific goal of this study is to identify where alumni are on the journey from tourist to traveler to citizen and to capture the dynamic relationship between these Jewish emerging adults and the Jewish institutions that serve them in the post-college years.

This study is one element of a larger body of research on Jewish young adults designed to contribute to the knowledge base for planners, policymakers, funders, and Jewish professionals. We want to help them better understand how to leverage the enthusiasm of Taglit alumni and encourage the next generation of Jewish adults to remain proud of their Jewish heritage, become Jewishly literate, and engage in the Jewish communal enterprise even before they are fully ready for citizenship.

Because community context is critical and multiple settings allow us to compare different approaches to engagement, the present study focuses on four of the largest Jewish communities in North America: Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Toronto. In each city, data collection was designed to

create a portrait of Jewish young adult life by describing both existing opportunities for young adult engagement as well as the Jewish experiences, aspirations, and needs of Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni.

The report begins with a description of the study design and methods. Next, the range of programs geared toward Jewish young adults in each of the four cities is described along with alumni patterns of engagement. The report then examines the factors that impede alumni participation in young adult programs, as well as their preferences, desires, and unmet needs for communal involvement. The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for successful initiatives that can make travelers out of tourists and citizens out of travelers.

Methods

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected for this study through individual interviews, focus groups, and web-based surveys. To capture the community context and the landscape of Jewish engagement opportunities, exploration in each city began with key informant interviews with leaders of programs and organizations geared toward Jewish young adults. Focus group and survey components of the study focused on Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni aged 22-30 (born 1978-1986) who were not currently undergraduate students and whose primary residence was in one of the target cities.¹

Key Informant Interviews

In each of the four research cities, interviews were conducted with directors and staff members of Jewish organizations engaged in outreach to young adults. In selecting individuals to interview, a wide net was cast for programs and institutions that have contact with Jewish young adults, to provide as broad a context as possible for understanding patterns of engagement and prospects for change. Fifty key informant interviews were conducted: 17 in Los Angeles, 15 in New York, 10 in Toronto, and 8 in San Francisco. Jewish professionals were asked how they view their work, what they do to engage young adults, and how they understand their successes and failures. They were also asked to describe other organizations that serve the young adult population in their city and discuss with which of those organizations they have collaborated.

Focus Groups

A total of 2,948 eligible alumni registered to participate in the study (Table 1).² All eligible alumni were sent email invitations to focus group discussions in their respective cities.

Table 1: Eligible Study Participants by City

City	Eligible Participants
New York	1,846
San Francisco	260
Los Angeles	452
Toronto	390
Total	2,948

After determining availability, participants were selected so that groups were homogeneous in terms of level of Jewish involvement but heterogeneous in terms of gender, age, and year of Taglit trip to Israel. In each city, relatively engaged and unengaged groups participated in organized conversations. These discussions took place between June 23 and July 29, 2008 and were held in various venues in each city, including libraries, community centers, shopping malls, and hotels. Discussions lasted approximately 90 minutes and participants received \$40 for their participation. A total of 168 young adults participated in 17 focus groups. Focus group participants discussed how they view their lives and identities, how they engage in Jewish life, and what kinds of programs attract them and why (see protocol in Appendix D).

Online Surveys

Those eligible alumni not selected or unavailable to participate in a focus group were invited to complete a brief online questionnaire focusing on their lives and involvement with programs targeted at Jewish young adults in their city. Surveys were completed in the same time frame as the focus groups. In each city, survey respondents were entered in a raffle to win a \$100 gift card. A total of 1,356 alumni completed online surveys. Response rates varied only slightly by city, and the gross overall response rate was 51%.³

Programs and Engagement

Two of the metropolitan areas in our study (San Francisco and New York) are listed in the top five best cities for young professionals by Forbes.com (2008) and another (Los Angeles) is in the top 25. For employment, New York and Los Angeles top the list of cities for entry level job seekers (CollegeGrad.com, 2008). With their diverse cultural offerings and large populations of young adults, each of the metropolitan areas studied is an attractive destination for recent college graduates.

The four cities examined boast a number of programs geared toward Jewish young adults (see Appendix B for descriptions of programs by city). Birthright Israel NEXT, a Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni organization, and its Canadian affiliate, the Birthright Alumni Community, have coordinators and programming for alumni in each city. In Los Angeles, Birthright Israel NEXT has staff housed at the Jewish Federation. In San Francisco, a grassroots young adult program, the Bay Area Tribe, gears some of its social and recreational programming specifically to Taglit alumni and serves as the local Birthright Israel NEXT entity. In Toronto, where the entire Taglit operation is organized by the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, posttrip programming is coordinated by the Birthright Alumni Community. In New York City, all organizing of local Taglit alumni is done exclusively by the Jewish Enrichment Center (JEC), an organization that emphasizes educational and religious programming.

In addition to programming specifically oriented to Taglit alumni, Federations, Jewish Community Centers (JCC), and other communal organizations sponsor young adult activities. All Federations have young adult

divisions that sponsor social, recreational, and social action events. The JCCs typically offer young adult programming, including arts and cultural events, film festivals, courses, and recreational activities. In San Francisco and Los Angeles, synagogues offer popular Friday night programs including musical worship services and receptions (*kiddush*). Many cities also host stand-alone volunteer and social action programs, including New York's JCorps and Hazon, and Los Angeles' Progressive Jewish Alliance. They also support arts and culture programs, including musical events (e.g., New York's JDub); arts and culture exhibitions (e.g., San Francisco's The Hub); and professionally staged parties (e.g., Los Angeles' JCafe). Each of the communities also has a number of independent, young adult prayer groups, often called *minyanim*, including Hadar (New York), Ikar (Los Angeles), Mission Minyan (San Francisco), and Annex Shul (Toronto).

Each city's young adult scene reflects its distinctive dynamics and confronts unique challenges. New York City, the largest community of Taglit alumni, boasts a rich array of programs. However, cooperation and communication among providers, and between providers and the young adult population, are limited and problematic. Toronto, in contrast, has a well-orchestrated communal approach to young adults in which organizations collaborate to provide multiple social and educational offerings. Los Angeles and San Francisco offer a handful of popular programs but far fewer than necessary to meet the needs of their sizeable young adult populations. The city reports (see Appendix A) examine community-specific characteristics in greater detail.

Although there are important differences in the scope and coordination of young adult programs across communities, comparable patterns of alumni engagement emerged across sites, in particular, among the U.S. cities. In the next section, we examine the general level of participation using data from survey and focus group samples as a whole.

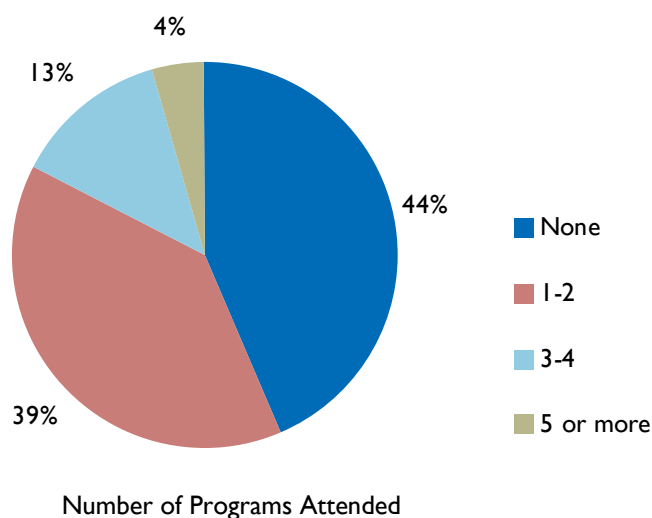
Overall Levels of Engagement

To assess involvement in young adult activities, we began by assembling a list of all young adult programs mentioned by key informants in each city. Alumni survey and focus group respondents were then asked whether they were familiar with, or had participated in, the most commonly

mentioned activities and programs in their locale. In addition, these young adults were asked to list any additional programs or activities that they had attended.

The following charts illustrate that alumni involvement with young adult programs has been modest. Since returning from their Israel trip—an average of three years prior to the survey—44% of alumni respondents did not participate in any young adult programs and 39% participated in just one or two (Figure 1). There is some variation across cities: Los Angeles has the largest proportion of totally disconnected alumni (52% attended no events) and Toronto has the smallest (37% attended no events). Across all four cities, about one-fifth (17%) of respondents

Figure 1: Level of Participation Since Return



reported having participated in three or more programs. (city-level data are reported in Appendix A).

Notwithstanding the relatively few programs attended by respondents, the intensity of involvement might plausibly have been quite high. Individuals might devote a great deal of attention and time to a small number of organizations or programs indicating that these young adults may have, indeed, found a “home” in Jewish communal life. This outcome appears to be the case, for example, for individuals who participate in weekly *minyanim*. To assess intensity of engagement, the survey asked respondents who participated in activities to characterize their level of participation as “a little” or “a lot.” Looking across cities, just one-tenth or less of those who participated in any Jewish activities characterized their level of involvement as “a lot” (Figure 2).

Looking more narrowly at programming specifically targeted to Taglit alumni through Birthright Israel NEXT partners one sees that

again the level of participation is seemingly low (Table 2). With the exception of Toronto, less than a quarter of surveyed alumni have participated in Birthright Israel NEXT programming. Only a very small group (5% or less) participate with any regularity or depth.

Figure 2: Percentage Participating in a Single Program “A Lot”

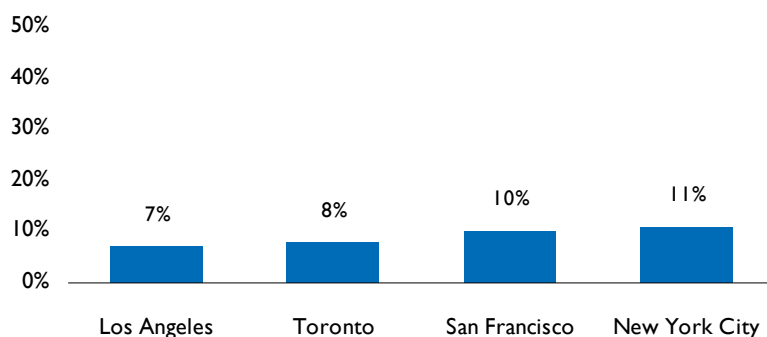


Table 2: Participation in Birthright Israel NEXT Programming

	Heard of it	Participates a little	Participates a lot
Birthright Alumni Community (Toronto)	74%	35%	4%
Birthright Israel NEXT (LA)	49%	11%	4%
Jewish Enrichment Center/Reunion (NYC)	38%	18%	5%
Bay Area Tribe (SF)	57%	17%	2%

The respondents' denominational affiliation is somewhat related to their propensity to engage in young adult programs. Thus, not unexpectedly, Orthodox respondents were more likely to be involved than non-Orthodox respondents. Among the latter, Conservative respondents were more likely to be involved than Reform or unaffiliated respondents. There were also modest denominational differences in the specific programs that attracted participants. A small number of programs were somewhat more attractive to Orthodox participants, including Jewish Urban Meeting Place (JUMP), The House, and CJPAC (Toronto); Hazon, Dor Chadash, and Manhattan Jewish Experience (New York); and JConnect (Los Angeles). One quarter or more of respondents who attended the activities of these groups reported their denominational affiliation as Orthodox.

In short, since their return from the trip, the vast majority of alumni who responded to our survey had participated in two or fewer (i.e., none or one) young adult programs. Perhaps of greater concern, most of those who had participated in any such programs

characterized their level of involvement as minimal.

To be sure, a small portion of alumni made dramatic and lasting changes in their Jewish lives as a result of their Taglit-Birthright Israel experience. Most notably, some were launched into an exploration of religious identity and went on to adopt substantially more observant lifestyles. The majority continue to have strongly positive memories of their Taglit experience but have slipped into patterns of limited Jewish engagement. Continuing the metaphor of tourism, they sightsee at a few programs and contemplate attending others, but rarely elect to actively explore the local options for Jewish engagement. They have become neither travelers nor citizens.

Desired Level of Engagement

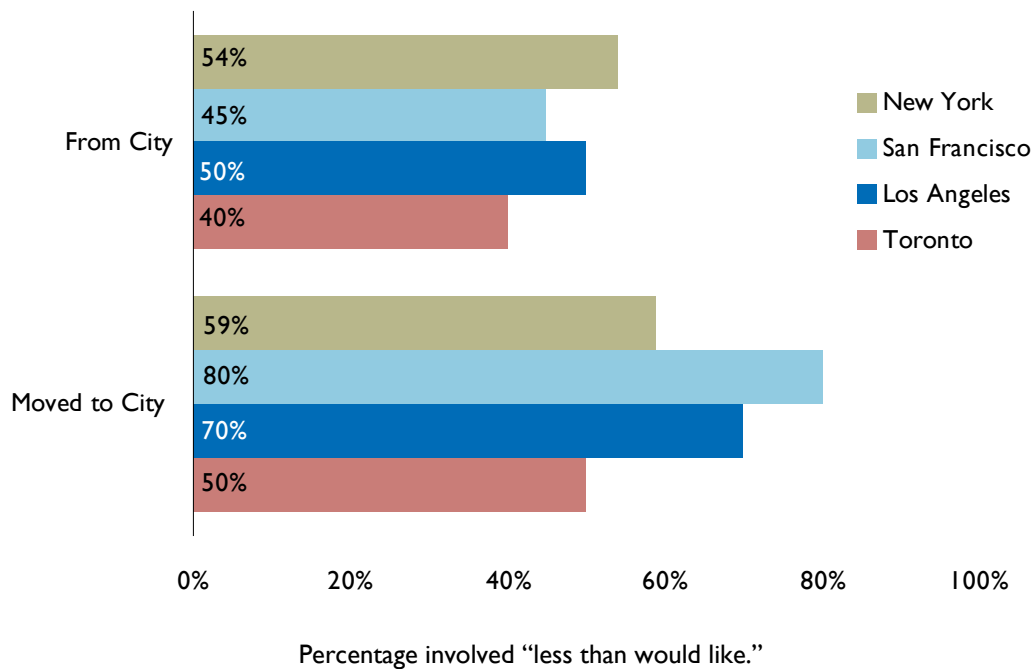
Notwithstanding their modest level of Jewish organizational engagement, most young adults surveyed indicated that they would like to be more involved in organized Jewish life (Figure 3). This was especially true of those alumni who are new to the cities where they currently

live but was also observed among those who are embarking on the next phase of their lives in familiar metropolitan areas. Interestingly, most alumni currently reside in metropolitan areas where they grew up or went to college (71% in San Francisco, 75% in Los Angeles, 85% in New York, and 93% in Toronto).

Notably, Toronto alumni, who are more involved in Jewish activities than their U.S. counterparts, are also more likely to describe their current level of involvement as “just about right.” There are several potential explanations for why Toronto alumni are more engaged than alumni in the three U.S.

cities. In contrast to major cities in the United States, Toronto’s Taglit-Birthright Israel program is fully integrated from trip recruitment to Israel experience to follow-through programming. In addition, Toronto’s Birthright Alumni Community and its partner organizations offer a wide range of well-designed programs that address diverse interests and needs. Toronto alumni are also somewhat more religiously traditional than their U.S. alumni counterparts.

Figure 3: Interest in Greater Jewish Involvement



Most of the young adults we surveyed and interviewed, including a clear majority of alumni in the three U.S. cities, want to be more involved. Their Taglit experience showed them how intellectually stimulating and personally meaningful Jewish involvement can be. However, they have a host of concerns and desires about the type of experiences they are seeking. The next section of the report examines the factors that constrict alumni participation in Jewish programs as well as the qualities and characteristics of programs they claim to seek.

Obstacles and Opportunities

How do we make sense of the rather conspicuous gap between alumni aspirations for Jewish involvement and the low level of their actual engagement? Surely, part of the answer derives from the unique set of demands on their time. Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni are busy trying out and building careers, relationships, and lives. They describe dizzying schedules and days busy with activity. Two-thirds (66%) are working full-time and an additional 14% are employed part-time. Almost one-third (29%) are enrolled in graduate education programs, and almost one-fifth (17%) study while holding a job.

The gap between aspiration and reality is also a reflection of the special character of most non-Orthodox Jewish identities. Taglit alumni are proud and comfortable with their Jewish identities. But at the same time, many focus group participants indicate that at this point in their lives, their Jewish identity is not central to their overall sense of self.

Being Jewish is a part of me. It defines who I am to some, but is only part of the holistic version I have of myself. (Survey)

I value programs that speak to my multiple identities as a student, as a woman, as a future health care professional. (Toronto)

Being Jewish just happens to be part of who I am, but I'm not really a member of the community. (New York)

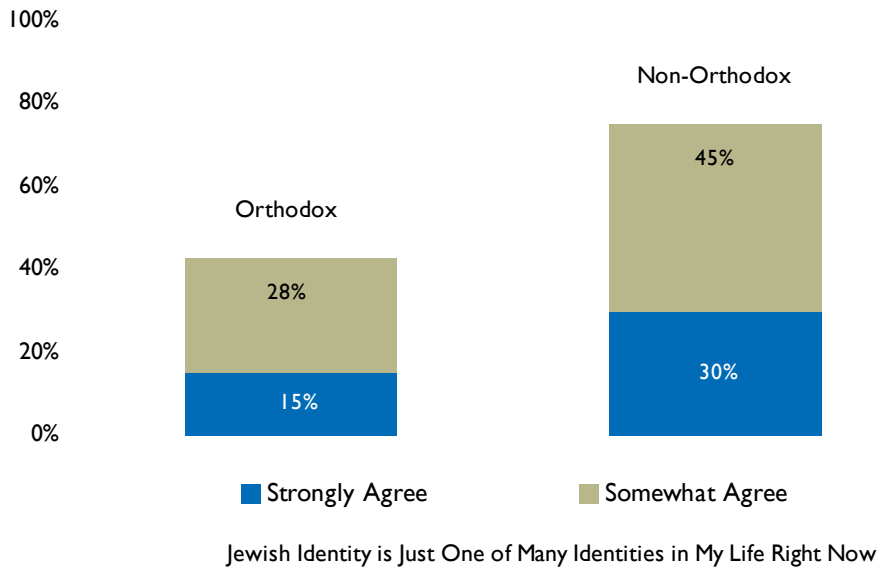
Right now I'm not really sure where Judaism fits into my identity. (New York)

Building on a computer analogy proposed by Turkle (1995), for today's emerging adults, identity is multi-faceted and distributed like a set of windows, any subset of which can be open at the same time. Within this framework, Jewish identity is but one of a myriad of identity "windows" that do not necessarily interconnect, let alone affect other windows of identity. Our survey data suggests that among young adults who identify as non-Orthodox, exploration and enactment of Jewish identity is simply not very salient at this point in their lives and that most (75%) view their Jewish identity as one among many aspects of their personal identity (Figure 4).

For many Taglit alumni the Jewish identity window is relatively modest, reduced to "a still small voice" easily lost amidst the buzz and bustle of their current lives. Jewish programming competes, often unsuccessfully, with their other interests, commitments, and obligations.

Time constraints and the limited salience of Jewish identities do not, however, fully explain the gap between aspiration and reality. The alumni we interviewed readily identified additional obstacles to their participation, as well as features of the existing young adult scene which they find unappealing or even repellent. They were also quite able to describe the programs that would satisfy their desire for greater involvement in organized Jewish life. This section of the report examines obstacles to participation in young adult activities, as well as alumni attitudes toward the current range of options for engagement in Jewish life.

Figure 4: Salience of Jewish Identity



Meeting Places, not “Meat Markets”

Disaffected from large social institutions, the Birthright Israel generation looks to smaller social settings and informal networks of friends for a sense of community. Watters (2003) coined the phrase “urban tribes” to describe the family-like role played by small groups of peers in supporting individuals through emerging adulthood. Emerging adults surround themselves with similar peers and, for the most part, explore activities as a part of this group.

The alumni we interviewed repeatedly told us that social network factors play a prominent role in decision making about what programs they will and will not attend. Moreover, analysis of the alumni survey underscores the significance of having friends who also attend

activities. In the survey data, participation in specific activities is highly correlated with having friends who participated in those activities. Indeed, between one-fifth and one-half of the variance in attendance can be traced to the friendship circle phenomenon. Although this does not prove causation, since alumni may go to a program because their friends go, or the friends may go because the respondent went, it does indicate that participation is strongly tied to network factors.

Well over three-quarters (84%) of survey respondents indicated that not having friends who would accompany them prevented participation, and one-third (33%) felt this was a significant obstacle. Entering a setting alone, especially where the planned activity involves social interaction, is potentially

stressful, a situation most would prefer to avoid.

It would be me going by myself and being forced to socialize in a room full of people who might already know people there. The emails make it sound like thousands and thousands of people are going to be there, and it just makes you feel lost and lonely. (New York)

If I don't know if there will be anyone I know, I'm reluctant to show up all by myself. (Toronto)

You go and you don't know any of these people, and it's awkward, and you don't want to do weird corny games to meet people. (Los Angeles)

For some young adults, the limitation is their impoverished network of Jewish friends. Contemporary young Jews are part of an ethnically and religiously diverse generation (Eck, 2001; Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008), and most are unlikely to have grown up, work, or live in predominantly Jewish settings. Their friendship networks often include non-Jews, and they are unsure how they or these friends will be received if they attend together.

I only have one or two Jewish friends which isn't very much. I would love to invite my other friends to go but I would feel like other people wouldn't welcome me with them. (Toronto)

Although many alumni respondents told us that they do, in fact, have Jewish friends, this is not necessarily enough to bring these young adults over the threshold of Jewish programming. This is especially so if their friends are not themselves active. In addition to making new experiences more fun, it is the company of friends that gives young adults

confidence that an activity is appropriate or expected for “someone like them.” When their friends do not participate in an activity, Jewish or otherwise, young adults begin to draw distinctions between those who attend and themselves. The net result is that Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni come to see those engaged in Jewish life as fundamentally different from themselves and do not expect that they will have sufficient grounds for making personal connections.

You wonder what kind of people go to events like that. Who are these people that constantly show up at these events? You don't necessarily think they're like you so you don't go. (New York)

Stereotypically the people who I think are going to be there are like super Jew Jews. I'm not very religious as a person. It's hard for me to find the people I end up being friends with there. (San Francisco)

The opportunity to meet fellow Taglit alumni is also insufficient, by itself, to attract young adults to programming. Paradoxically, as Taglit-Birthright Israel becomes a more normative experience, it may carry less weight as a unique source of camaraderie or connection. Just as the shared experience of having had a bar/bat mitzvah does not provide enough common ground on which to found a friendship, participating in a Taglit trip does not denote a sufficient level of similarity to other young adults.

If the only thing that I have in common with these people is that we went to Israel at some time on a trip that is under the same name, well that's it. That's all we have in common. (New York)

Network factors are an obstacle to participation, but they also have the potential to be a draw. Taglit alumni frequently told us that they are looking for opportunities to meet and get to know their Jewish peers. At the same time, these young adults clearly state that they do not want to attend what they colloquially refer to as “meat markets” where the explicit and emphatic focus is on meeting potential mates. Young adults are keenly aware of the “continuity agenda” of the organized Jewish community. They appreciate that the Shoah remains a prominent feature of Jewish collective memory. It is not, however, a central element of their generational Jewish story. They are aware of contemporary concerns over Jewish demographic trends, but this anxiety does not resonate with them personally.

You feel the fear of grandparents that Jews will not marry Jews. I recognize the concern. I hear it everyday. But that's not what being Jewish is about. It's about celebrating our identity. (San Francisco)

It's like 'meet Jewish singles! Make Jewish babies!' (New York)

They're all singles events. The overarching feeling is that you can meet people to date. It feels forced, and it feels fake, and it doesn't feel genuine. It doesn't feel like you're going for a community, but to get drunk and to meet your potential spouse. (Los Angeles)

Young adults describe ideal social opportunities as interest-based settings where the development of personal connections is an organic outgrowth of sharing time and activities together. They express interest in meeting their peers through a host of activities organized under a Jewish framework. Some of these, such as hiking, biking, dinner clubs,

softball, and salsa dancing are not inherently Jewish activities; while others, such as book groups, cooking classes, and social action may involve explicitly Jewish content. As an added bonus, young adults see interest-based programs as providing some assurance that they will find common ground with other participants. These are the kind of programs that they would be willing to venture into without the company of friends.

They want to meet new people, but they're also interested in what they do with their lives. They want to identify with other Jewish people about that stuff. People like to associate with people who do similar stuff. (Los Angeles)

I think the key is that it has to connect with your actual interests. One of the things about Birthright is that you have people with interests all across the spectrum, and I don't think that hoping that people are just going to connect by themselves is going to work for an event. (Los Angeles)

Knowing that there will be a demographic or common interest beyond just being Jewish young adults, you can be confident that even though I'm going by myself, for example, I'll probably get along with most of the people. (San Francisco)

The fact that it's Birthright people or Jewish people doesn't change the fact that whatever the activity is if it's not interesting you're not going to go. (New York)

As they move away from their college student identities and enter their mid-twenties, Taglit alumni are increasingly interested in smaller, more socially intimate settings. Large party-like gatherings that might have attracted them as recent college graduates no longer hold as much appeal. In focus groups, alumni often described examples of the kind of social

settings they prefer. Invariably these gatherings were small, informal, personal, and grassroots in nature.

Come the holidays, I go to my friend's house, and she invites all her friends over, and they're all Jewish. It's my own personal community. (San Francisco)

This friend of mine, he just basically started his own thing. It's totally informal, but he has a mailing list with hundreds of people on it. There's a potluck like every six weeks and eighty people come. (New York)

She organized a thing kind of in the model of an old-school salon weekly meeting. It was a small group that would meet at a person's house. Just a community there to discuss a given topic. (Los Angeles)

In terms of Jewish engagement, the impact and potential of social network factors is incontrovertible. The resounding message of the present research is that young adults participate in Jewish activities less than they would like because they suspect they do not resemble their more involved peers and/or have few Jewish friends willing to accompany them. At the same time, many alumni would like to further develop their circle of Jewish friends and pursue some of their interests in a Jewish framework. Whether they are new to the cities where they currently reside or seeking a social network that reflects their current stage of life, Taglit alumni are looking for “inns and resting places of the human spirit” (Nisbet, 1953) where they can experience a sense of connection and community. Described as small in scale and fun, their ideal setting allows them to have

ongoing contact with peers in the context of interest-based activities.

Intellectual and Cultural Experiences

Previous research indicates that Taglit alumni enter their emerging adult years with limited personal experience of their Jewish heritage (Chertok, Phillips, & Saxe, 2008). The Jewish education of most is limited to the years before their bar or bat mitzvah and, by the time they are in college, they are substantially disengaged from Jewish life (Sales & Saxe, 2006). In addition, most have little or no experience of a home filled with Jewish ritual or tradition. With little Jewish education past their early teens and few experiences of the weekly rhythms and rituals of Jewish home life, these young adults have limited Jewish “religious capital.” Aware of their limited knowledge of the rituals and choreography of Jewish observance, they are concerned that they will be seen as incompetent and expect to feel like outsiders in Jewish religious settings (Osherson, 2001; Sales & Saxe, 2006).

I try for ways that I can be more involved in the Jewish community, but I really felt like an outsider. (Toronto)

As someone who isn't actively Jewish, sometimes I feel hesitant to go to an event because I feel like I'm not going to know what everyone else knows and feel like odd man out. (Los Angeles)

I feel like I'm not Jewish enough to do some of those things. A lot of people are religious, and I totally don't know all the protocol involved. I won't look religious, I'll look stupid. (Toronto)

I grew up in a half-Jewish household. I feel like these are the real Jews, and I'm like 'Oh hi, I'm a half-Jew. Can I come too?' (New York)

During their Taglit-Birthright Israel trip, alumni connected to the land and people of Israel rather than to the religion. For most, the trip was primarily a Jewish group experience, not a religious experience (Saxe et al., 2008). For some, it was a welcome revelation to find that many of their Israeli peers were secular (Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht, & Saxe, 2008). They returned feeling authentically Jewish, often for the first time, only to have that fledgling belief undermined by the religious “agenda” that they perceive in some programs. In particular, they are wary of and try to avoid events where they will be subject to what they perceive as religious proselytizing. Anything focused on Shabbat, for example, is interpreted as a situation where they are likely to be pressured to adopt greater religious observance.

A lot of these events have to do with a Shabbat dinner...it's not a neutral setting so if I have never heard of it, I don't really know what it's about so I don't really know what's going to happen when I go there. So why would I go there in the first place? (Toronto)

The people who organized it asked me questions like, 'Do you practice? Do you eat Shabbat dinner, do shul?' I was 'no, no, no' to everything. It made me feel bad. So that's why I'm geared away from doing the whole Jew thing because I don't want that discomfort. (Toronto)

I need to be able to show up and have a good time and not feel like the religion is pushed on you. (Los Angeles)

Although many young adults we interviewed and surveyed do not think of themselves as religious they do, in fact, speak favorably of programs with Jewish intellectual and cultural content. The alumni we interviewed expressed interest in Jewish-themed lectures, discussions, short courses, and high-quality cultural events such as films, art, and live music that are specifically geared toward young adults. They want programs that offer rich content, intellectual stimulation, and exposure to new and diverse perspectives.

I wish that more of the programs were actually educational programs. If there's a really fascinating lecture or a speaker that I want to hear, then I don't feel so much like I'm a stranger...and maybe meet some people in a discussion afterwards. (San Francisco)

Speakers, people that are rabbis, that are incredibly articulate and can actually whet your appetite about what this religion is all about and about what it can provide for someone. (Los Angeles)

The last time many Taglit alumni had a chance to consider the implications of Jewish text and tradition for their lives was during their early teen years. As emerging adults, they are facing important decisions about what they stand for and who they want to be. Some are asking for opportunities to learn about and grapple with these issues through a Jewish lens. Although many express wariness of programs that explicitly focus on religious observance, they are open to lectures and courses as a way to learn more about Judaism from an intellectual perspective.

What I'm looking for is a political conversation where lots of Jews come and talk about how they feel about

things, so I feel less alone when it comes to questioning what's going on in Israel today. (San Francisco)

Educational programs that are more religious based and involve people in active conversation. (San Francisco)

The types of programs suggested by alumni indicate that they are, indeed, looking for intellectual and cultural ways to explore their Jewish identity. Assessing participation in Jewish cultural events in New York City, Cohen and Kelman (2005) found that Jewish cultural experiences build community among young adults while blurring the boundaries between their diverse identities and networks. These cultural offerings also provide avenues to Jewish engagement that can be characterized as “entertaining, playful, ironic, contemporary, and generationally distinctive.” (Cohen & Kelman, 2005, p.5)

Immersive and Israel-related Experiences

Years after their trip, alumni still fondly reminisce about their Taglit-Birthright Israel experience and are looking for ways to reconnect with it. Many have found ways to return to Israel on alumni trips, study abroad programs, or vacations with friends and many more are hoping to find affordable ways back. But even beyond actually returning, they are looking for experiences connected to the land and people of Israel.

It'd be interesting if there was a video that showed you the places you've been to, like a movie night ('Here's the Dead Sea!'). And they show you footage, and they help you relate. I think it would spark some of your memory. (San Francisco)

Anything that relates to the culture and people of Israel is appealing. They want to get together with their fellow alumni to watch Israeli soccer matches, view Israeli films, have hummus and shawarma tastings, and listen to Israeli music. Many also want opportunities to learn conversational Hebrew.

I haven't really found a place that's kind of informal, just chatting in Hebrew, practicing. (New York)

I'd really love more language events. I can't find anywhere I could practice and have working conversation and build up vocabulary. I would love Hebrew programs. (New York)

Immersive programs like Taglit-Birthright Israel allow young adults to step outside of their busy lives and demanding schedules and fully devote themselves to an experience. Being removed from their everyday environment and their usual social networks allows them to be more open to new friendships and intense social bonding. Alumni often spoke about their desire to recreate these aspects of their Taglit trip through other Jewish immersive experiences including, but not limited to, extended travel.

The intense bonding experience in Israel of being on this trip for 10 days totally removed from your everyday environment. Try to replicate that sort of thing. That is what I think gets people involved on a permanent basis. You have to remove them from their natural environment and really do something interactive, like a rafting trip or camping trip. (Los Angeles)

I was thinking of more trips. Not necessarily to Israel but rather short weekend getaway trips. I think a lot of people enjoy the quick friendship afforded in trips. (Toronto)

Accessible, Proximate, and Well-Timed Activities

Regardless of the salience of their Jewish identity or their motivation to become engaged, for many young adults the logistics of Jewish programs simply do not work. When asked what prevents their participation, survey respondents were likely to indicate that the timing and location of events were inconvenient or impossible (Figure 5).

In focus groups, alumni reiterated the same concerns. Early evening events, especially those on weekdays, are incompatible with their work and/or school schedules. The problems are only compounded when they are reliant on public transportation.

The seven o'clock start to me is the biggest deterrent to coming to stuff because I probably can't make it unless it's a slow work day. (New York)

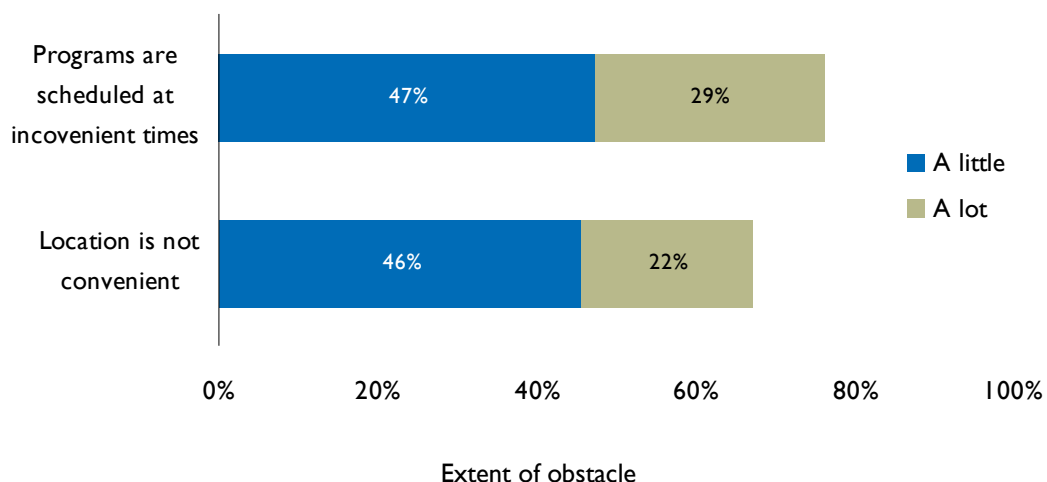
I think that the biggest thing that prevents me from going to events is when things are scheduled. As a full-time professional it's very difficult to get to a lot of these events. (San Francisco)

As someone who didn't have a car, I found that events that are seven o'clock on a Friday are really hard for me. Because I have an hour bus ride, so sometimes the distance and the time that they start is really an issue. (Los Angeles)

Location is also an important factor shaping program participation. In the cities we examined, programs and activities tend to be located in the "Jewish downtowns" of the previous generation and not in the neighborhoods where most young adults now live and work.

It needs to be somewhere centrally located whether that means rotating events between places to host them. Sometimes you have stuff downtown. Sometimes it's uptown. Sometimes it's even in an outer borough, God forbid. (New York)

Figure 5: Logistical Barriers to Participation

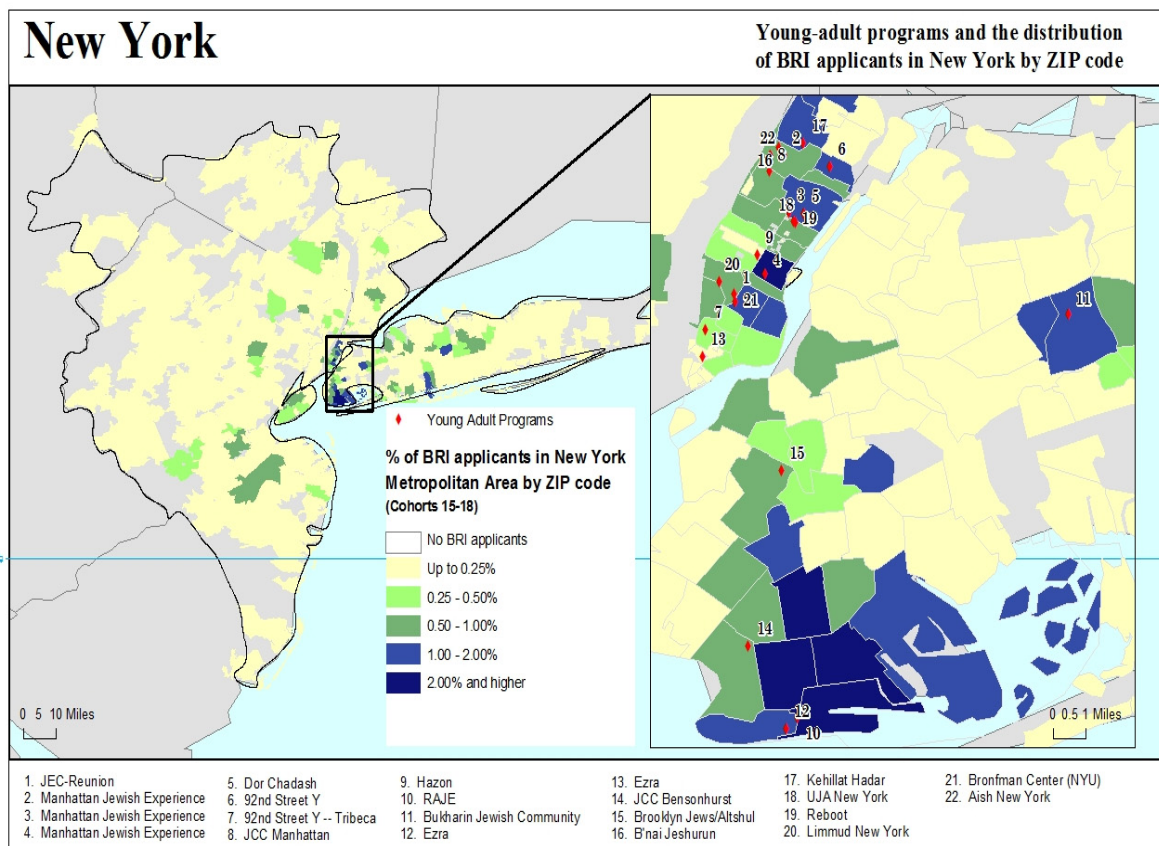


The vast majority of young adult activities in New York City take place in Manhattan. However, a large proportion of Taglit alumni live in Brooklyn with few young adult programs. Of those that exist, most are targeted at ethnic minority communities including the Russian and Bukharin communities (Figure 6). There are similar disparities between program and population concentrations in the other three cities as well. In Toronto, young adult programs are mostly located in the downtown and midtown areas, but much of the alumni population lives further north in Thornhill. In Los Angeles, programs are concentrated in the west side; alumni who live in the valley have far fewer options. In the Bay Area, alumni living in Berkeley, Palo Alto, and the Silicon Valley have fewer options than those living in San Francisco. (See Appendix C for the full set of city maps.)

Portrait of Alumni

The portrait that emerges from this research depicts a generation of Jewish young adults attempting to balance competing concerns and interests. They are comfortable with their Jewish identity, but it is not necessarily central to their lives. Connections and obligations of family have been loosened and replaced by peer networks. They engage in exploration and experimentation in many spheres of life but question whether they have the background to venture into Jewish religious settings. They disdain singles events geared explicitly at matchmaking and programs that seem to have a religious agenda. Instead, they seek small, intimate settings in which to connect with compatible Jewish peers and pursue general interests in a Jewish framework. They also seek programs that enrich intellectually and culturally, as well as those that offer opportunities for intensive and Israel-related experiences.

Figure 6: New York City Programs and Alumni Population



Implications: Equipping Travelers, Empowering Citizens

Taglit-Birthright Israel has demonstrated its ability to connect young adults with their Jewish identity and with the land of Israel. For many, it marks a watershed moment that catalyzed their personal connection to the Jewish people and history. In surveys and in focus groups, many alumni told the same story: Their trip to Israel exposed them to new ways of thinking about their Jewish identity, their place in the story of the Jewish people, and their connection to the land of Israel. Especially for those who had grown up in unaffiliated or secular homes, it was the first time they felt authentically part of the Jewish people. But translating newly found or rekindled feelings of Jewish peoplehood into changed patterns of connection and engagement proves harder to achieve once they leave the college setting. Our findings from studying four communities and a large sample suggest that relatively few alumni participate in young adult programs; and of those who do, still fewer report that such programs are especially important in their lives. Despite the strong emotions and attitudes that Taglit evokes even years after their trip, as post-college young adults, most alumni remain only occasional tourists in the Jewish communal world and often do not find meaningful ways to connect to Jewish life.

Jewish tradition describes in detail the roles and responsibilities of the citizen: After three months the new resident contributes to the care of the poor; after nine months he or she contributes to the burial of the city's poor; and after twelve months the resident incurs the financial obligation of securing community defenses (Baba Batra 8a). Given their developmental stage of life, modest Jewish experiential background, and limited knowledge, most Taglit alumni are far from

ready to become full-scale citizens of their Jewish communities. Today, the North American Jewish community must develop a new set of guidelines—a new *mishnah*—regarding the needs, roles, and responsibilities of our young adult travelers. Rather than emphasizing membership in a congregation or single organization, Jewish communal strategy should focus on equipping young adults with the information, skills, motivation, and support that they will need to explore and experience different aspects of Jewish life. Meaningful exploration during the young adult years is the best way to foster future citizenship.

Change theorists (Lewin, 1951; Schein, 1995) would argue that Taglit-Birthright Israel effectively begins the “unfreezing” process necessary to transform Taglit tourists into travelers willing to explore their Jewish identity and connections. The impetus to learn something new, according to Schein, always begins with a confrontation with information that disconfirms assumptions, expectations, or self appraisal. Separated from the social norms of their usual lives and immersed as a group in the trip experience, Taglit jumpstarts this process. The experiences are designed to be emotionally and cognitively meaningful and allow participants to think of themselves, their Jewish identity, and their connection to the land and people of Israel in dramatically new ways.

Although critically important, the attitudinal shift that we observe among Taglit alumni is not sufficient to propel most along the course from tourist to traveler to citizen. The prospect of entering new settings and trying on new behaviors raises their anxiety about the potential for exposure of incompetence.

On one hand, these young adults may aspire to greater Jewish involvement; on the other hand, they lack the tools and sense of “psychological safety” necessary to embark on their journey of discovery.

Transforming passive tourists into active travelers will require programs that serve as “practice fields.” These opportunities, formal and informal, allow individuals to try on new behaviors in a supportive environment where errors are expected and embraced rather than feared. They are also settings for developing alternative networks and stabilizing new lifestyle choices. The organizations, programs, and activities examined in this report often intend to provide such practice fields. Their character and culture, however, are not consistently attractive to potential participants and their number, variety, and location are not yet proportionate to the need or demand.

Young adult travelers also desire and need companions with whom to share the uncertainty as well as the wonder of new experiences. Most Taglit alumni report that the supportive connections they made during the trip rapidly devolved to infrequent, online exchanges post trip. In addition, many do not believe that they will find peers with whom they can connect at Jewish young adult events. Support for realigning existing social networks and/or enabling alumni to develop new circles of friends must be a key component of any engagement strategy.

Keeping in mind the need for practice fields and the importance of supportive networks, we offer the following suggestions for building a communal strategy to leverage the

enthusiasm of Taglit alumni and enable them and their peers to transition from tourists to travelers and, eventually, accept the responsibilities of citizenship.

1. *Travelers experience more when they share the trip.* Echoing the conclusions of our earlier work with Taglit alumni (Sasson, Saxe, Rosen, Selinger-Abutbul, & Hecht, 2007) the present study highlights the need for strategies that foster the social network elements of the trip. Starting with the Taglit experience itself, efforts should be made to increase the number of community-based trips, especially those targeted toward post-college-age young professionals. Many alumni also ask for venues and opportunities in their home communities where they can get to know peers in an informal manner. In New York and Toronto, such venues include JEC and JUMP. Both, however, have an Orthodox vibe that is right for some but not most.

2. *Travelers need “maps” to know where they might go.* Many young adults complain that they simply do not know what is available in their local Jewish community. An information-rich environment can be fostered through improved communication between programs, especially between Birthright Israel NEXT entities and other local venues for Jewish life. Improved communication between programs and the young adults they wish to reach is also necessary. Web-based navigation tools that present up-to-date information about programming are essential. One could also imagine the development of websites where young adults can gather peer-generated descriptions and reviews of engagement opportunities and venues.

3. *Travelers need choices in destination.* Programs and venues should serve as diverse entry points, emphasizing interest-based activities; small, intimate groups; and stimulating, challenging, enriching content. Big parties and programs that encourage religious observance attract a few but also alienate many more and should not be the only or predominant form of experience offered. Creative, well-run engagement opportunities that are neighborhood or workplace based with the aim of comprehensive coverage by neighborhood should be expanded.

4. *Not every traveler is ready for the same trip.* Many young adults with comparatively weaker Jewish educational backgrounds seek and benefit from programs, activities, and learning opportunities provided by Jewish professionals and outreach workers. Notably, in New York City, and to a lesser extent Los Angeles and Toronto, such opportunities are often provided by Orthodox or Orthodox-leaning outreach organizations. For some young adults the values and approach of such organizations are a good fit. Others perceive such organizations as having an “agenda” (e.g., promoting an Orthodox lifestyle) and keep their distance. Programs should be established to provide career opportunities for high-level educators, rabbis, and community builders, especially in the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements which are underrepresented relative to the Orthodox in the field of young adult outreach.

5. *Travelers can be guides to each other.* The alumni we met want to develop their own young adult Jewish communities. Programs that empower young adults to “do-it-yourself” should be promoted. These are the very skills

that will foster a deeper sense of ownership in the Jewish world and that can potentially inspire future citizenship. Young adults can and do create their own programs, however, they are often best able to accomplish this goal with the guidance of an educator, organizer, or rabbi. In addition, even grassroots ventures need the support of existing institutions. Behind the scenes of many (but not all) Jewish start-ups are a number of “establishment” organizations such as the UJA-Federation of New York, Jim Joseph Foundation, or the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (to name just a few). The role of established Jewish foundations and organizations should be less to initiate such projects than to support their requests for logistical and/or financial assistance. Even programs that are not peer initiated or led should include young adults in an advisory capacity.

The vitality of Jewish life in North America derives in no small measure from the willingness of Jewish communities to reinvent organizations and practices to adapt to changing circumstances. Today, during the critical years for identity formation and establishment of careers and families, Jewish young adults remain largely outside of the community’s institutions. Perhaps paradoxically, our best hope for one day bringing them back inside is to shift our paradigm of young adult engagement from developing established citizens to empowering young adults to embark on their own explorations of Jewish identity, life, and community. Seeding and supporting new initiatives, organized according to the principles described in this report, have the potential to catalyze a renaissance in young adult Jewish life.

Notes

¹ No comprehensive list of up-to-date contact information for Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni exists; therefore, an email was sent to the contact email addresses of 86,331 alumni who met the target age range asking if they currently reside in one of the four cities being studied. A link embedded in the email directed alumni to a registration form which asked about their involvement in various aspects of Jewish life and current contact information.

² 3,858 alumni initially registered to participate in the study. Of these, 566 were ineligible because they were either out of the target age range or were still undergraduate students. An additional 320 alumni were ineligible because they reported currently residing outside of the study's geographic target areas.

³ Compared to the general Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni population, female respondents were overrepresented in the survey (64% versus 52%). In terms of denominational affiliation, survey respondents were a close match to the general alumni population. The exceptions: Survey respondents were slightly more likely than the general Taglit alumni population to be affiliated with a major denomination as opposed to "Just Jewish." In addition, a larger proportion of Toronto survey respondents were affiliated with the Conservative movement (28% versus 35%) and a smaller proportion of San Francisco respondents were affiliated with the Reform movement (41% versus 34%).

References

- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Boorstin, D. (1992). *The image: A guide to pseudo-events in America*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Chertok, F., Phillips, B., & Saxe, L. (2008). *It's not just who stands under the chuppah: Inter-marriage and engagement*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Steinhardt Social Research Institute.
- Cohen, S.M. & Kelman, A.Y. (2005). *Cultural events and Jewish identities: Young adult Jews in New York*. New York, NY: The National Foundation for Jewish Culture.
- CollegeGrad.com (2008). CollegeGrad.com names top 25 cities for entry level job seekers. Retrieved October 2008 from <http://www.collegegrad.com/press/top-cities.shtml>.
- Eck, D. (2001). *A new religious America: How a "Christian country" has now become the world's most religiously diverse nation*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Forbes.com (2008). Best cities for young professionals. Retrieved October 2008 from http://www.forbes.com/2008/07/09/cities-progressionals-young-forbeslife-cx_mw_0709you.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Mortimer, J. T. & Larson, R. W. (2002). Macrostructural trends and the reshaping of adolescence. In J.T. Mortimer & R. W. Larson (Eds.), *The changing adolescent experience: Societal trends and the transition to adulthood* (1-17). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Nisbet, R. A. (1953). *The quest for community*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Osherson, S. (2001). *Rekindling the flame: The many paths to a vibrant Judaism*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2008). *U.S. religious landscape survey*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Sales, A. L., & Saxe, L. (2006). *Particularism in the university: Realities and opportunities for Jewish life on campus*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.
- Sasson, T., Mittelberg, D., Hecht, S., & Saxe, L. (2008). *Encountering the other, finding oneself: The Taglit-Birthright Israel mifgash*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

- Sasson, T., Saxe, L., Rosen, M., Selinger-Abutbul, & Hecht, S. (2007). *After Birthright Israel: Finding and seeking young adult Jewish community*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Steinhardt Social Research Institute.
- Saxe, L., & Chazan, B. (2008). *Ten days of Birthright Israel: A journey in young adult identity*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England.
- Saxe, L., Phillips, B., Wright, G., Boxer, M., Hecht, S., Sasson, T. (2008). *Taglit-Birthright Israel evaluation: 2007-2008 North American cohorts*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.
- Saxe, L., Sasson, T., & Hecht, S. (2006). *Israel at war: The impact of peer-oriented Israel programs on responses of American young adults*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.
- Saxe, L., Sasson, T., Phillips, B., Hecht, S., & Wright, G. (2007). *Birthright Israel evaluation: 2007 North American cohorts*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.
- Schein, E.H. (1996). Kurt Lewin's change theory in the field and in the classroom: Notes toward a model of managed learning. *Systems Practice*, 9, 27-47.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- U.S. Bureau of the Census. (1998). *Statistical abstracts of the United States*. Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census.
- Watters, E. (2003). *Urban tribes: A generation redefines friendship, family, and commitment*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Wuthnow, R. (2007). *After the Baby Boomers: How twenty-and thirty somethings are shaping the future of American religion*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Appendix A: Landscape of Opportunities and Engagement by City

New York City

New York City, home to one of the largest Diaspora Jewish communities, has an impressive number and variety of organizations and programs directed at young adult Jews. Learning venues, such as Manhattan Jewish Experience, Jewish Enrichment Center, 92nd Street YMHA, and Mechon Hadar, offer multiple opportunities to study Jewish text, tradition, and culture at both introductory and advanced levels. Young adults can bike with Hazon, volunteer with JCorps, watch Jewish film at the JCC of Manhattan, attend innovative and edgy arts events at the 14th Street YMHA, and immerse themselves in contemporary Jewish music at the annual Jewzapalooza festival.

Opportunities for worship are, for the most part, clustered on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. For example, several independent minyanim, such as Kehilat Hadar, provide traditional, egalitarian services. In addition, B'nai Jeshurun, an independent synagogue, is home to well-known and well-attended Shabbat services. Just a year ago, Town and Village Synagogue, a Conservative congregation located on the Lower East Side, initiated a once-a-month Friday night service and dinner program that regularly attracts 80-100 young adults.

New York's ethnically diverse Jewish community is reflected in an array of organizations addressing the needs of Ethiopian, Latino, Persian, Syrian, and Israeli Jews. Several organizations such as Russian American Jewish Experience (RAJE), Rjeneration, EZRA, Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst, and the Bukharin Community Center provide programs for

young adults connected to the Former Soviet Union. The Jewish International Connection of New York (JICNY) provides social gatherings, lectures, and educational programs for Jews from all over the world.

Jewish communal organizations in New York appear to be actively working to expand their reach and, where needed, reinvent themselves. For example, the 92nd Street YMHA, a perennial leader in providing Jewish cultural and recreational programming, recently opened a new venue in the Tribeca section of lower Manhattan, with programming and settings specifically designed to appeal to young adults.

The alumni survey asked respondents whether they knew of the young adult organizations and programs mentioned by our key informants, and whether they or their friends had participated in these activities. A substantial portion of alumni respondents reported knowing about the 92nd Street YMHA, the JCC of Manhattan, and Birthright Israel NEXT. Far fewer indicated that they had heard of other programs including the Jewish Enrichment Center (Table A1). Across the board, individual programs attract the active participation of, at best, one quarter of alumni.

Table A1: New York City Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations

	Heard of it (%Yes)	Participates (%At all)	Friends Participate (%Yes)
Jewish Enrichment Center/Reunion	38%	23%	25%
14th Street or 92 nd Street YMHA	67%	20%	29%
JCC Manhattan	67%	20%	30%
Hazon	12%	3%	8%
Dor Chadash	15%	6%	12%
Manhattan Jewish Experience	24%	9%	15%
Birthright Israel NEXT/ NEXT Shabbat	45%	13%	19%
Organizations focusing on FSU-related individuals*			
Rjeneration**	27%	23%	21%
Jewish Community House Bensonhurst**	33%	22%	22%
Russian American Jewish Experience (RAJE)	28%	15%	23%
EZRA	58%	25%	44%
Bukharin Jewish Community	16%	5%	12%

*Based on respondents indicating FSU-family connection.

** Focus group participants

Just over half (56%) of New York-based alumni report having participated in at least one young adult activity since returning from their Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. Most of these alumni have participated in programmatic offerings from one or two organizations (Figure A1).

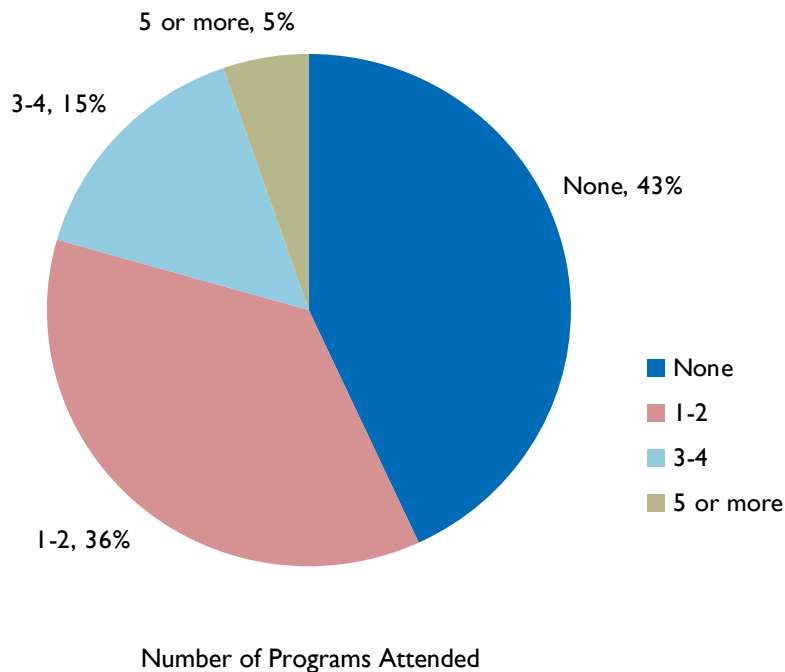
Our scan of engagement opportunities in New York City suggests a fairly

comprehensive menu of offerings, as described above, together with a serious bottleneck in the flow of communication to Taglit alumni about these opportunities. Birthright Israel NEXT New York sponsors programming exclusively through the Jewish Enrichment Center (JEC), and alumni do not distinguish between the two. Both the Birthright Israel NEXT New York and JEC web-pages exclusively list JEC events and

programs. JEC appears to be the only organization with access to the contact list for New York Taglit alumni and does not share this information or alert alumni of young adult offerings from other organizations. The JEC-Birthright Israel NEXT New York partnership translates into an information *cul de sac* where alumni are directed back and forth between the two websites but never informed about the rich offerings elsewhere in the communal landscape. In addition, several

key informants and alumni focus group participants described JEC as having an “Orthodox outreach” (or *kiruv*) agenda. Although the organization’s religious and educational programs attract a segment of the alumni population, others may be discouraged or alienated by programming they identify as encouraging an Orthodox lifestyle.

Figure A1: New York Level of Participation Since Return



San Francisco

Although relatively compact geographically, San Francisco and the East Bay (including Berkeley and Oakland) function as distinct communities. Jewish young adults live and work in both areas but do not readily travel between them for social or recreational activities.

In June 2008, San Francisco's Contemporary Jewish Museum joined with Reboot (a New York-based organization) to sponsor a strikingly creative Shavuot event for young adults. The event, "Dawn: a late-night arts and culture festival," featured well-known writers and musicians and drew hundreds of participants.

San Francisco's more routine young adult scene is anchored by three organizations which attract the largest proportion of Taglit-

Birthright Israel alumni (see Table A2). Bay Area Tribe (BAT) organizes monthly recreational, cultural, and social events for Jewish young adults. The Tribe promotes its activities as "alternatives to the meat market and bar nights." Since 2008, BAT has served as the Birthright Israel NEXT entity for the San Francisco area. Most alumni respondents to our survey have heard of BAT and nearly one-third have friends who have participated. Nearly one-fifth have themselves participated in a BAT activity.

Temple Emanuel's Young Adult Community draws hundreds of Jewish 20 and 30-somethings to a monthly Late Shabbat worship service. The monthly gatherings are the cornerstone of the synagogue's young adult group, which also sponsors educational social and recreational activities. Slightly over one-third of alumni respondents have heard

Table A2: San Francisco Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations

	Heard of it (%Yes)	Participates (%Yes)	Friends Participate (%Yes)
510 Jews	7%	3%	2%
The Hub	16%	4%	9%
Bay Area Tribe (BAT)	57%	18%	31%
Late Shabbat	36%	18%	29%
YAD—SF Federation	24%	12%	17%
Mission Minyan	31%	12%	31%
Moishe House	9%	3%	4%
YLD—East Bay Federation	8%	5%	7%
Birthright Israel NEXT/NEXT Shabbat	30%	8%	11%
New Israel Fund*	28%	6%	6%

*Focus groups only

of Late Shabbat and nearly one-third have friends who have participated. Nearly one-fifth have themselves attended.

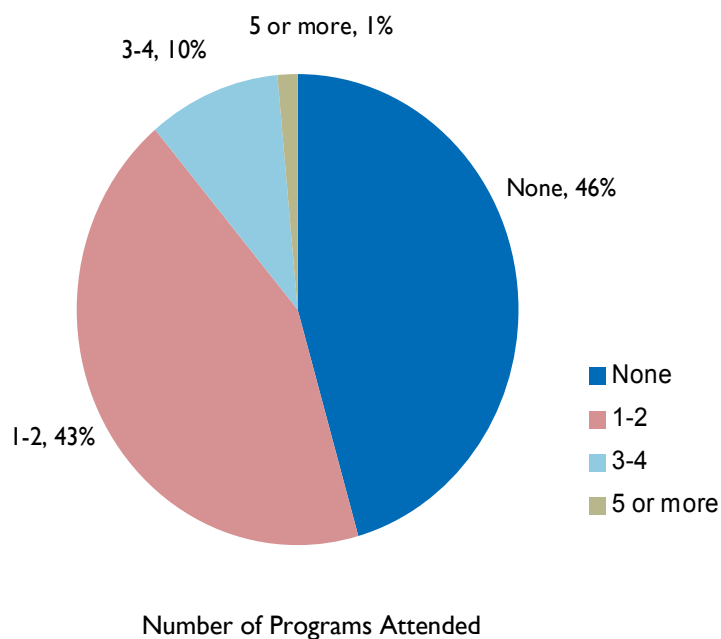
Mission Minyan is a traditional-egalitarian prayer group that meets for Shabbat and holiday worship. Organized exclusively by volunteers, the Minyan also offers learning opportunities and coordinates Shabbat hospitality. Nearly one-third have heard of the minyan and a similar proportion has friends who have attended. Twelve percent have themselves participated.

The San Francisco and East Bay Federations have young adult divisions that sponsor activities. University of California-Berkeley Hillel sponsors a graduate student organization, “510 Jews.” The JCC houses

“The Hub,” an “arts, culture and community” program geared toward Jewish young adults. These programs are less widely known and have attracted fewer alumni survey respondents.

Since returning from Taglit-Birthright Israel, 54% of respondents have participated in the activities of a young adult program or organization, including those listed in Table A2, as well as additional programs identified by survey respondents. Most of these individuals participated in one or two activities (see Figure A2).

Figure A2: San Francisco Level of Participation Since Return



Los Angeles

Los Angeles' large Taglit alumni population is socially and geographically divided. The Santa Monica mountains divide the two major geographic centers of Jewish life in Los Angeles: the Westside and the San Fernando Valley. Young adults typically avoid traveling from one area to another. Within the city, transportation challenges related to traffic and parking often constrain participation. The young adult community is also socially divided between Ashkenazi, Israeli, Persian, and Russian groups. Several organizations have as their mission transcending the ethnic divisions.

Young adult events are advertised by Gesher City, an electronic bulletin board and social

networking website that is relatively new to Los Angeles. Gesher City also convenes “clusters” of special interest groups. Staff members from organizations and programs that cater to young adults meet periodically as LOYAL (Leaders of Young Adult Leaders) to coordinate calendars and activities.

Los Angeles has a Birthright Israel NEXT office housed at the Jewish Federation. Birthright Israel NEXT sponsors several alumni events monthly and collaborates with other young adult organizations in community-wide initiatives, including Purim and Hanukah parties. More prominent features of the young adult scene include Sinai Temple's very popular Friday Night Live musical service and the organization JConnect LA. The latter organization sponsors social,

Table A3: Los Angeles Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations

	Heard of it (%Yes)	Participates (%Yes)	Friends Participate (%Yes)
JDub	25%	7%	12%
IKAR	19%	8%	11%
Friday Night Live	48%	22%	30%
Professional Leaders Project	14%	3%	5%
Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA)	22%	4%	10%
JConnectLA	29%	14%	16%
JCafeLA	15%	4%	7%
Birthright Israel NEXT/ NEXT Shabbat	49%	15%	21%
Moishe House	9%	2%	7%
Purim at the Roxy*	19%	6%	11%

*Focus group participants only

holiday, and educational programs, including study groups that meet at coffee houses and parties such as the Malibu Mansion BBQ. The organization boasts an “agenda free” approach that is “fun, hip and cool.” However, their approach entails “strict halachic (e.g., Orthodox) observance...so that everyone can feel comfortable.”

Birthright Israel NEXT, Friday Night Live, and JConnect are the only programs widely recognized by respondents to our alumni survey (Table A3). Nearly half of the alumni we queried had heard of Birthright Israel NEXT and Friday Night Live; nearly one-third had heard of JConnect. Many fewer had actually attended their events: roughly one-fifth had been to Friday Night Live and one-sixth to either Birthright Israel NEXT or JConnect.

JCafe and JDub are event production companies with distinctive approaches and audiences. JCafe plans parties and singles events that feature “innovative ice-breakers, and networking.” The organization’s website announces the wedding engagements of couples who met at their events. In contrast, JDub produces “innovative Jewish music” with an emphasis on cross-cultural dialogue. JDub staff characterize their audience as “artsy, creative types” in contrast to the more “conventional” types who are drawn to Friday Night Live.

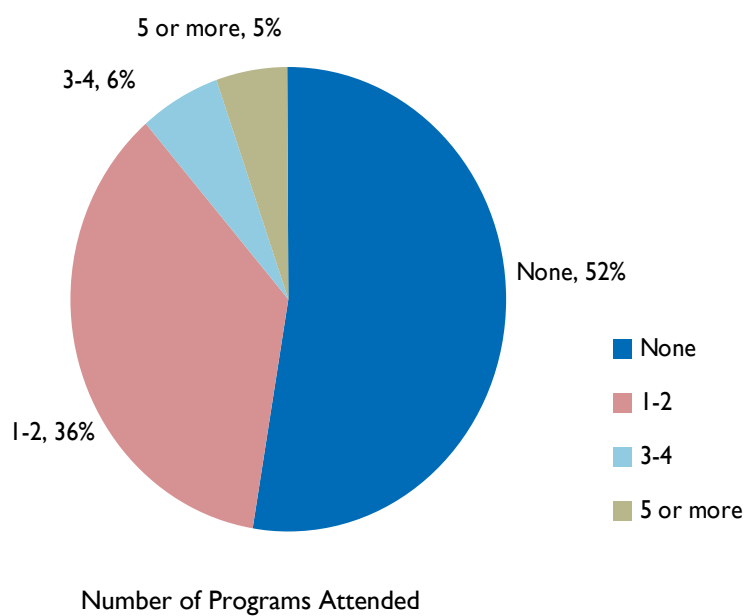
IKAR and Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA) cultivate intellectual and political engagement and attract young adults for whom such program qualities are especially important. IKAR is an independent congregation that functions as a “spiritual community” for many young adults, primarily in their thirties. The

group also sponsors “the Grey Area,” an occasional series of discussions and cultural events held in attractive venues and geared toward adults in their twenties. PJA sponsors educational, political, and social justice events, occasionally in partnership with JDub and Reboot. The organization combines a social justice orientation with a hip, contemporary aesthetic. Recent events have included a sweatshop-free fashion show “Rags to Righteousness,” and the Hanukkah event, “Vodka Latka: A Festival of Rights.”

Los Angeles is also host to several programs that operate in a number of large metropolitan areas, including the Professional Leadership Project and Moishe House. The former initiative trains selected “talent” for future leadership positions in Jewish organizations, primarily through intensive mentoring relationships with established Jewish leaders. The latter is a network of Jewish-themed group houses where residents sponsor activities for their peers, including holiday parties and Shabbat dinners.

Since returning from Taglit, 47% of Los Angeles-based alumni have participated in the activities of one or more young adult program or organization (Figure A3). Most of these individuals have participated in one or two programs. In addition to the programs listed in Table A3, a few respondents mentioned the Orthodox outreach program Aish Ha Torah; the young adult groups of the Stephen S. Wise synagogue and Temple Beth Am; the young adult divisions of the Federations; JQ International, a GLBT group; and 30 Years After, a new Iranian Jewish group.

Figure A3: Los Angeles Level of Participation Since Return



Toronto

In contrast to major cities in the United States, Toronto's Taglit-Birthright Israel program is fully integrated from trip recruitment to Israel experience to follow-through programming. Taglit trips for Torontonians are organized by Canada Israel Experience (CIE) which is a branch of the Jewish Federation. CIE trip staff are drawn from the professional staff of the organization responsible for posttrip programming, the Birthright Alumni Community (BAC).

Staffed by four professionals, the BAC maintains contact with alumni of all CIE tours and carefully tracks their participation in its events. The organization sponsors a wide range of social, cultural, educational, and Israel-oriented activities on its own and in

collaboration with other Toronto Jewish organizations. During 2007-8, BAC sponsored, co-sponsored, endorsed, or advertised 181 events. As indicated in Table A4, nearly three-quarters of Toronto-based alumni have heard of BAC and nearly two-fifths have participated in its events.

Many BAC classes and events are held at the Jewish Urban Meeting Place (JUMP), a new center for young adult programs located in Northern Toronto (Thornhill). Like JEC in New York, JUMP provides an attractive venue for social events and classes, including Hebrew classes, cooking workshops, and book clubs, as well as Shabbat dinners and holiday programs. However, also like JEC, some key informants described JUMP as having a gentle but clearly discernable Orthodox outreach orientation. These key

Table A4: Toronto Alumni Familiarity and Engagement with Select Organizations

	Heard of it (%Yes)	Participates (%Yes)	Friends Participate (%Yes)
Birthright Alumni Community (BAC)	74%	38%	38%
Jewish Urban Meeting Place (JUMP)	64%	20%	38%
The House	43%	18%	27%
The Annex Shul	53%	12%	32%
Canadian Jewish Political Action Committee (CJPAC)	43%	13%	26%

informants worried that such an approach might alienate Jewish young adults.

Closer to the downtown, The House also serves as a meeting place and venue for educational and cultural programs. With a focus on “meaningful experiences to help young Jews along their journeys,” The House has a “spiritual vibe.” Many alumni are familiar with these two settings; roughly one-fifth have personally participated in the activities of each.

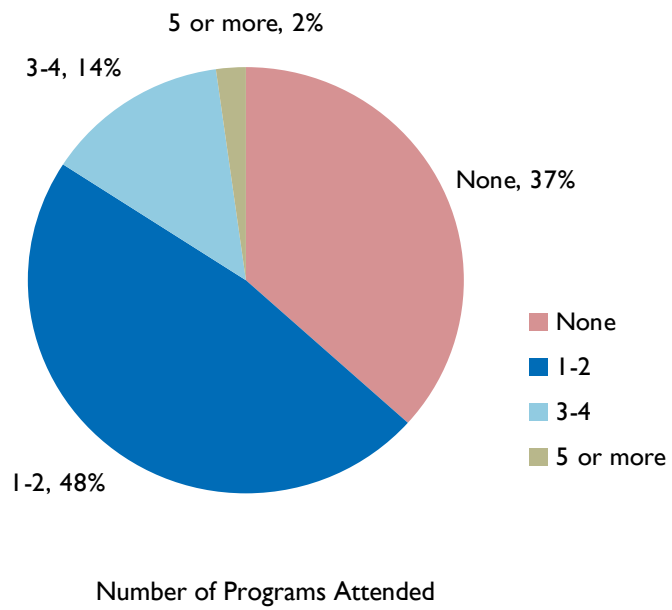
Canadian Jewish Political Action Committee (CJPAC) is an independent political advocacy organization that mobilizes Canadian Jews to engage in the political process, especially with respect to Israel. The organization has a number of events and special programs for young adults, including a Young Leadership Israel Advocacy program. Forty-three percent of Toronto-based alumni have heard of the group, and 13% have participated in its programs.

The Annex Shul is a Carlebach-style minyan that meets in the University of Toronto’s

Hillel building. The minyan regulars are twenty and thirty-something young adults living in the downtown. Twelve percent of Toronto-based respondents to our survey have attended.

Since returning from Taglit, 63% of Toronto alumni participated in young adult activities, with most of these participating in the activities of one or two organizations (Figure A4). This figure suggests that Toronto alumni are more engaged than their counterparts in the United States. This difference may be due to the well-integrated, collaborative, and well-designed programming of the BAC and its partners. However, it may also be due in part to the relatively more traditional and affiliated character of the Toronto alumni population. [Toronto alumni are on average more religiously traditional (Conservative or Orthodox) than their U.S. counterparts.] Also, in contrast to U.S. Jews, who are more likely to live independently in apartments, roughly half of Toronto Jewish young adults live with their parents.

Figure A4: Toronto Level of Participation Since Return



Appendix B: Local Organizations and Programs

New York City Programs

Aish NY—promotes programs specially targeted at young professionals in their late 20s and 30s. Aish offers networking and socializing parties and Shabbat dinners for young professionals, as well as an adult bar/bat mitzvah class.

Brooklyn Jews—connects young Jews living in Brooklyn to different educational, social, and religious resources in the community. Its website promotes Jewish opportunities in the Brooklyn area including independent minyanim, community service opportunities, and learning sessions with Brooklyn Jews' founder Rabbi Andy Bachman.

Dor Chadash—organizes programs and events for New Yorkers with strong connections to Israel—whether they are Israelis living in the United States or Americans who are passionate about the Jewish state. The organization sponsors talks by prominent Israeli politicians and authors, hosts concerts by popular Israeli artists, and promotes Israeli art, food, and culture. The organization's target audience is young professionals without families, generally between the ages of 22 and 45.

EZRA—runs young adult trips, including Taglit-Birthright Israel trips, which seek to strengthen Jewish identity among Russian-speaking young adults. EZRA also organizes weekly Shabbat dinners, weekend retreats, and Hebrew classes.

Hazon—promotes a pluralistic environmentally sustainable approach to Jewish community life. The organization

coordinates Jewish biking and hiking trips, in the New York area and in Israel, sponsors conferences on food and the environment, and runs a Jewish organic food cooperative. While Hazon does not specifically target young adults, many of the organization's participants are in their 20s and 30s.

Jewish Community Center (JCC)

Manhattan—operates a division for young adults in their 20s and 30s run by a full-time professional staff person. The JCC hosts wine and cheese gatherings, movie screenings, Shabbat dinners, cooking classes, and recreational sports leagues. Most of their audience lives in Manhattan, particularly around the Upper West Side of Manhattan where the JCC is located.

Jewish Community House of Bensonhurst (JCBH)

—offers young adult programs for Russian-speaking Jews out of their building in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. JCBH offers service trips to Eastern Europe, local community service opportunities, and cultural events such as a Tu B'Shvat wine tasting and art museum tours.

Jewish Enrichment Center/Reunion

—serves as the sole official provider for Birthright Next NY and is the only organization in New York with access to the Taglit alumni lists. The organization provides rich Jewish educational content for unaffiliated Jewish young adults as a means of buttressing their Jewish identity. They offer educational-oriented trips to Israel and Eastern Europe, as well as weekly Jewish learning classes. One of their best-known programs is an adult bar/bat mitzvah class.

Jewish International Connection

(JICNY)—is a religious Jewish outreach organization targeted at non-American Jews currently living in New York City. JICNY professional staff organizes themed dinners, multilingual Jewish learning sessions, and couples' bar nights. It also connects people with observant families for Shabbat dinners. The organization conceives of itself as a "Jewish home" for Jews living abroad in New York.

JCorps—coordinates community service opportunities for single Jewish young adults through an online registry. The organization has no paid staff or facilities and is run entirely by volunteers. The organization is officially non-denominational and its audience cuts across the range of Jewish backgrounds, from modern Orthodox to secular.

Kehilat Hadar—is a traditional egalitarian Shabbat morning minyan that caters mostly to young adults in their 20s and 30s. Many of the regular participants come from highly engaged Jewish backgrounds and attend the minyan because of its spirited peer-led prayer service and casual atmosphere.

Manhattan Jewish Experience (MJE)—sponsors free or heavily subsidized Jewish education classes targeted at unaffiliated young professionals. The classes are taught in informal environments, often accompanied by food and drink, and are intended for people with little or no Jewish educational background. MJE also conducts a "beginner" Shabbat morning service (with a mechitzah) as well as parties, networking events, and retreats.

Mechon Hadar—serves as an educational and organizational resource for individuals seeking vibrant and innovative Jewish prayer and learning. It operates a year-round and summer yeshiva program that engages students in intensive Torah study, prayer, and social action. Additionally, Mechon Hadar offers resources, forums, and consulting for leaders of independent prayer communities.

92nd Street YMHA—offers a variety of young adult-oriented classes and activities, the bulk of which are housed at its new young adult location in Tribeca. 92Y Tribeca, as it is called, advertises itself as an "arts and entertainment" venue. It hosts film series, theater events, and lectures and features a kosher café and a bar. Although the activities are subsidized, the prices of classes and events are more expensive than those offered by other organizations.

Russian American Jewish Experience

(RAJE)—serves as a community center for Russian-speaking young adults in Brooklyn and offers learning sessions and Shabbat dinners. RAJE also offers a fellowship program where participants can earn a free trip to Eastern Europe or Israel by participating in learning sessions and attending Shabbat retreats.

RJeneration—is a grass-roots program organized by a group of Russian-Jewish young adults that puts on occasional social and cultural events aimed at their peers. Their events include Christmas and Halloween parties, book salons, and a "Shabbat under the Stars" in Central Park.

San Francisco Programs

510 Jews—runs programs for Jewish graduate students and young professionals living in the Berkeley area. Most events are social or recreational and aimed at graduate students looking for a break from their studies. The program is run through Berkeley Hillel.

Bay Area Tribe (BAT)—describes itself as a “grassroots community organization” for Jewish young adults. Programs are mostly social or recreational and are organized by volunteers. BAT recently became the local organizer for Birthright Israel NEXT in San Francisco.

Late Shabbat—is a special Friday night service targeted at people in their 20s and 30s. The very popular service is held on the second Friday night of every month at Temple Emanu-El in downtown San Francisco and features a lively after service party with beer and snacks.

Moishe House—provides rent subsidies and monthly program allowances to young adults responsible for organizing Jewish programming in their respective residences. Each Moishes House decides which type of programs best serve Jewish young adults in that area. Moishes House programs include Shabbat dinners, community service programs, and Purim parties.

Mission Minyan—holds weekly Friday night and Saturday morning services in the Mission district of San Francisco. The services are non-denominational but mostly follow the traditional Hebrew liturgy. The minyan also organizes occasional classes and social gatherings at participants’ homes. All services

and programs are organized by members of the community on a volunteer basis.

Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA)—seeks to “assert a progressive Jewish presence” in social justice campaigns. Among its more prominent causes are workers’ rights, reforming the criminal justice system, and promoting dialogue between Muslims and Jews. It also offers a two-year program called the “Jeremiah Fellowship” which provides organizing and activist training for young adults interested in community work.

The Hub—organizes arts and culture-oriented programs for Jewish young adults at the JCC in San Francisco. It hosts performances, arts classes, and “new Jewish ritual” programs. The participants in these activities are mostly in their late 20s and 30s. The Hub draws primarily from the neighborhoods around the JCC.

Young Adult Division San Francisco Federation (YAD)—caters to young adults who are interested in becoming involved with Federation. It hosts weekly “happy hours,” learning sessions, and “mini-mission” trips to Israel. Most of the participants are in their 30s, and the programs are geared toward grooming the next generation of Federation leaders.

Young Leader Division East Bay Federation (YLD)—offers special programs and events for young adults, with special perks to those who donate at least \$365 to Federation. YLD offers bar nights, picnic lunches, and food and wine tastings. Like the YAD in San Francisco, it seems intended for those with interest in becoming future Federation leaders.

Los Angeles Programs

Atid—offers social, educational, and cultural programs for young adults. The organization sponsors cocktail parties, bike rides, speed study sessions, and a life-skills seminar series called “Coaching Havurah.” Atid also offers a popular Friday night service called “Friday Night Live” which is targeted at young adults. The service is followed by an after-party with food and alcohol.

Birthright Israel NEXT LA—operates as the official Birthright Israel organization in Los Angeles. The organization offers events limited to Birthright Israel alumni, such as sushi-making and museum tours, and promotes other LA young adult organizations’ events.

IKAR—is an independent minyan started in 2004 by a small group of people in their 30s and 40s who sought to create a community that they felt was lacking in LA. In addition to services, IKAR organizes house parties, community service events, and monthly Shabbat dinners following services.

JCafeLA—hosts large parties for single young professionals at popular LA night clubs. Their events are co-sponsored by many different LA Jewish organizations, including Atid and Federation and attract a broad variety of people in their 20s and 30s.

JConnectLA—targets young adults in their 20s and 30s, offering trendy and innovative programs to encourage young Jews to connect to the Jewish community. JConnectLA sponsors lavish social events, introductory Judaism classes, holiday parties, and business networking gatherings. The organization also

offers services which follow a traditional format, including a *mechitzah*, in order to include people from all levels of observance.

JDub—promotes new and innovative Jewish music as a way of asserting the arts as a means of Jewish self-expression. JDub produces CDs, events, and concerts with Jewish themes. JDub is especially relevant to young Jews who are interested in expressing their Judaism through a cultural format.

Moishe House—provides rent subsidies and monthly program allowances to young adults responsible for organizing Jewish programming in their respective residences. Each Moishe House decides which type of programs best serve Jewish young adults in that area. Moishe House programs include Shabbat dinners, community service programs, and Purim parties.

Progressive Jewish Alliance (PJA)—seeks to “assert a progressive Jewish presence” in social justice campaigns. Among its more prominent causes are workers’ rights, reforms to the criminal justice system, and Muslim-Jewish dialogue efforts. The organization also offers a two-year program called the “Jeremiah Fellowship” which provides organizing and activist training for young adults interested in community work.

Young Leadership Division Los Angeles Federation (YLD)—runs programs that seek to involve young adults in their 20s and 30s with the Federation. These events include large holiday parties, speakers, networking and community service programs. Young adults who give a \$1,000 or more to the Federation receive access to special programs and events.

Toronto Programs

Aish Toronto—operates in and around the University of Toronto campus and targets its programs at undergraduates, ages 18-24. A staff of two to three Rabbis teaches a variety of introductory classes. Aish also offers inexpensive trips to Israel.

Annex Shul—is a grassroots community that organizes services, meals, and events for young professionals and graduate students living in downtown Toronto. Their popular Friday night services use Carlebach melodies and employ a double mechitzah, allowing participants to choose whether they want single sex or mixed seating. The majority of the participants are in their 20s.

Birthright Alumni Community (BAC)—serves as the Birthright alumni organization for the Toronto area. BAC has been very successful at providing alumni with a broad array of post-Taglit options by partnering with many Toronto young adult Jewish organizations. BAC organizes monthly networking breakfasts, Israel discussion groups, parties, and arts and music events. BAC also advertises many other Toronto organizations on their website including JUMP and CJPAC.

Canadian Jewish Political Action Committee (CJPAC)—is a national Israel political-advocacy organization. CJPAC organizes Israel advocacy seminars, parties, and a fellowship program for students interested in learning about Canadian politics.

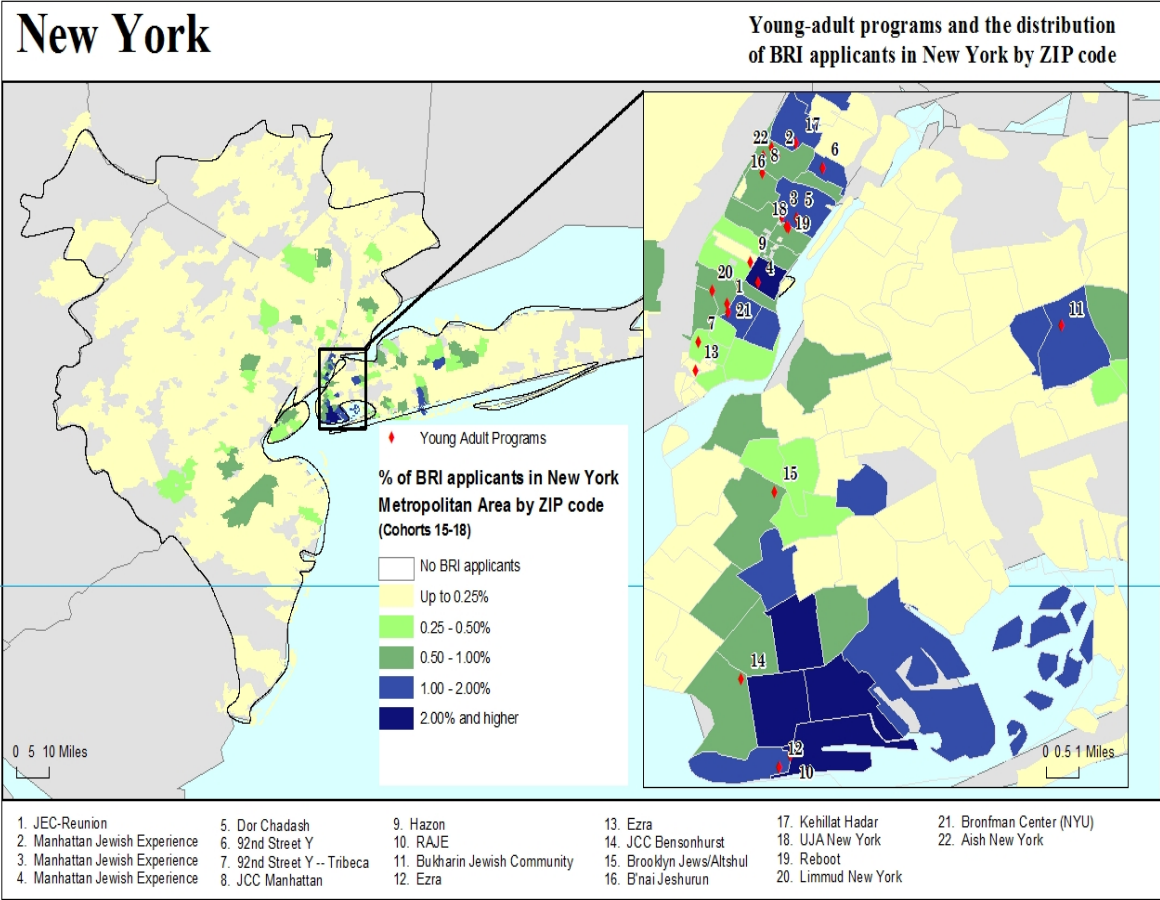
IMPACT Toronto—is a division of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto that seeks to engage young adults, 25-40, with the UJA's mission. IMPACT offers social events and business networking programs as well as social action programs such as One Hot Day, a city-wide day of volunteering. The majority of IMPACT's participants are in their 30s.

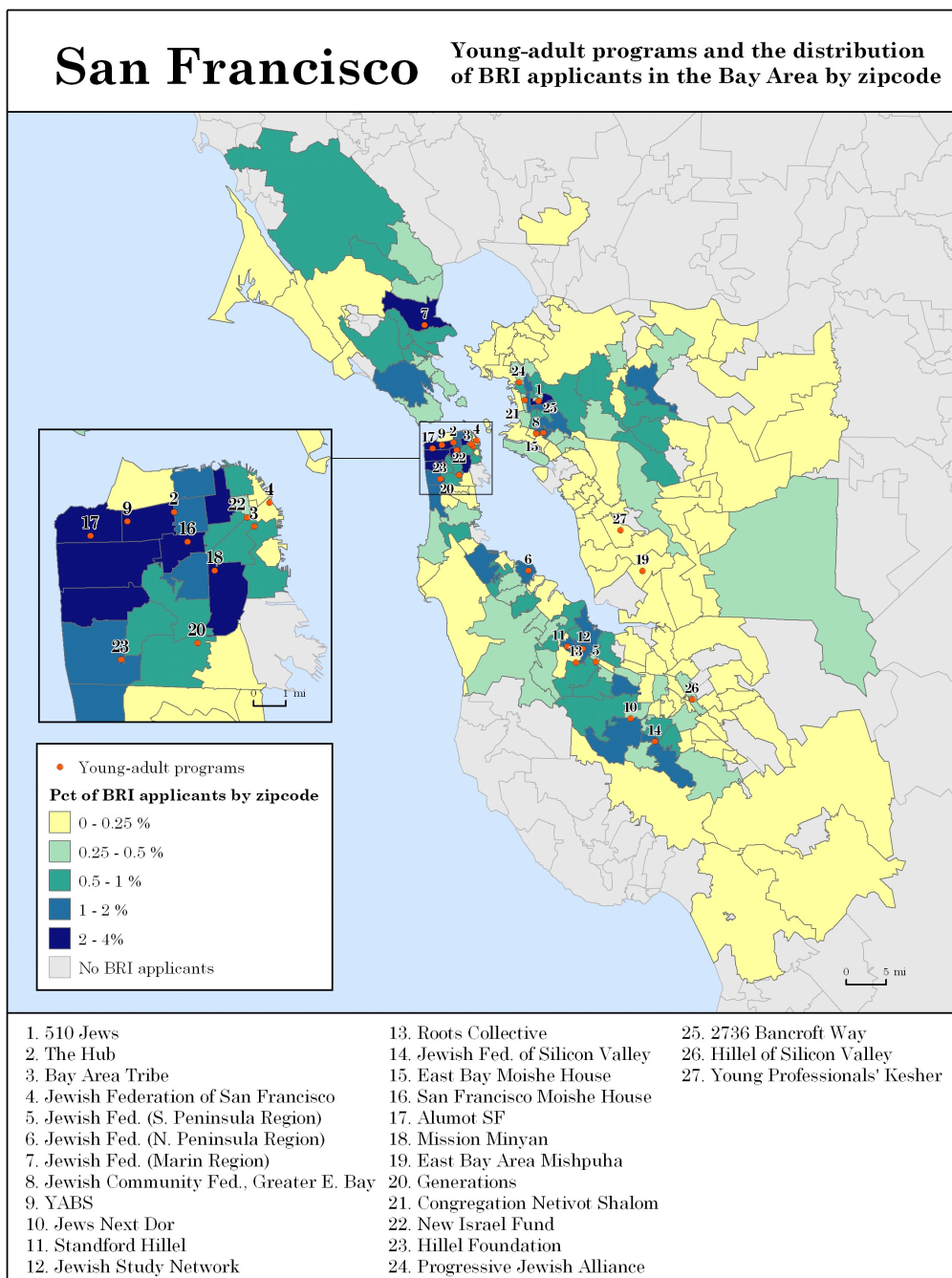
Jewish Urban Meeting Place (JUMP)—provides a comfortable “hang out” space for Jews in their 20s, replete with classrooms, a kosher kitchen, free internet, and a large flat-screen TV. JUMP offers classes in yoga, cooking, Jewish art, and Hebrew as well as weekly Shabbat dinners. JUMP also organizes inexpensive trips to Israel.

Koffler Center for the Arts—promotes cutting-edge Jewish art and artists. The center hosts galleries, concerts, book salons, and film screenings. Although Koffler does not explicitly program for young adults, the edgy nature of its programs has a natural appeal for that audience. It also has partnered with many other Toronto young adult organizations including BAC, IMPACT Toronto, and the Annex Shul.

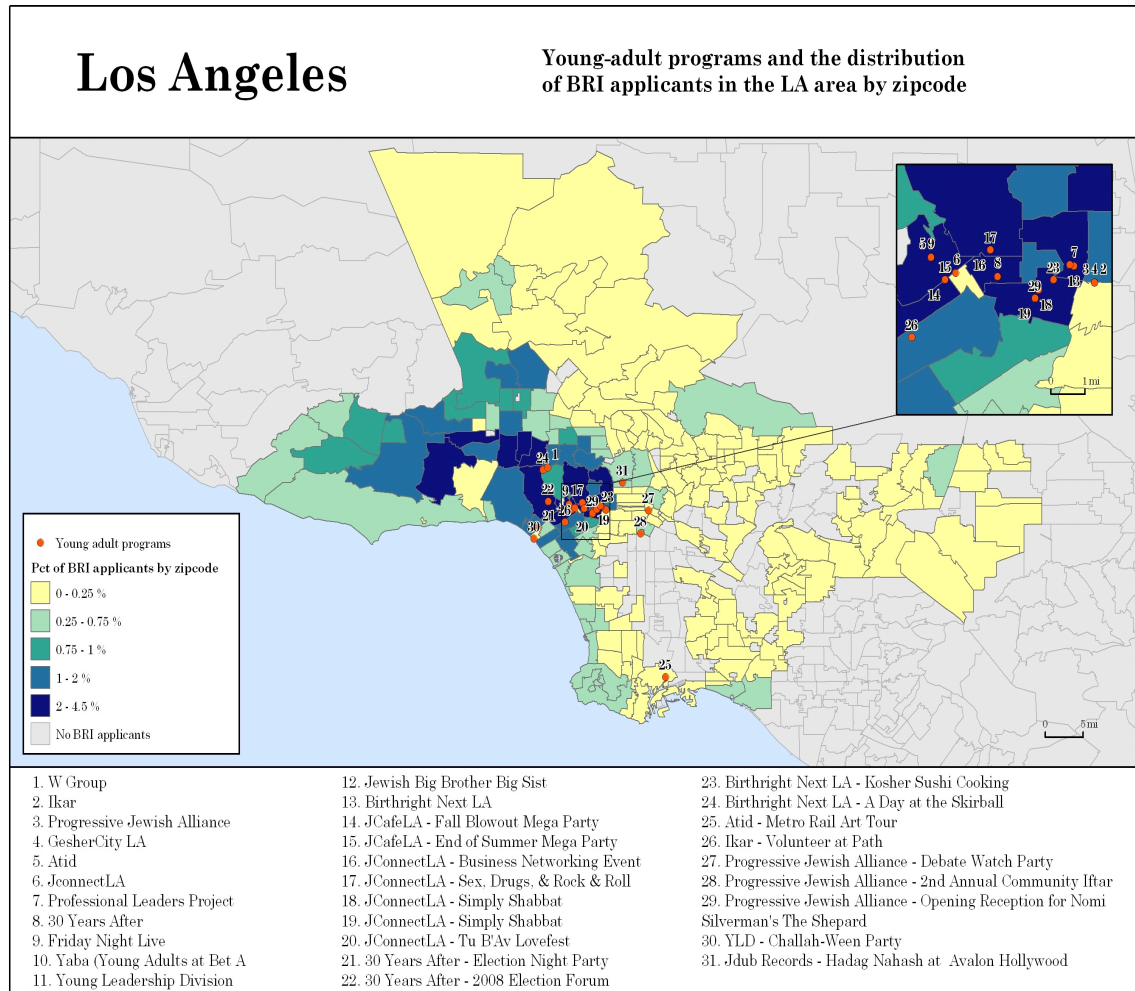
The House—seeks to provide meaningful Jewish experiences for young Jews in their 20s. Operating out of a Midtown storefront, The House offers classes about Israel and Judaism, as well as volunteer opportunities and musical jam sessions. The House and JUMP compete for a similar target audience.

Appendix C: Programs and Alumni Populations

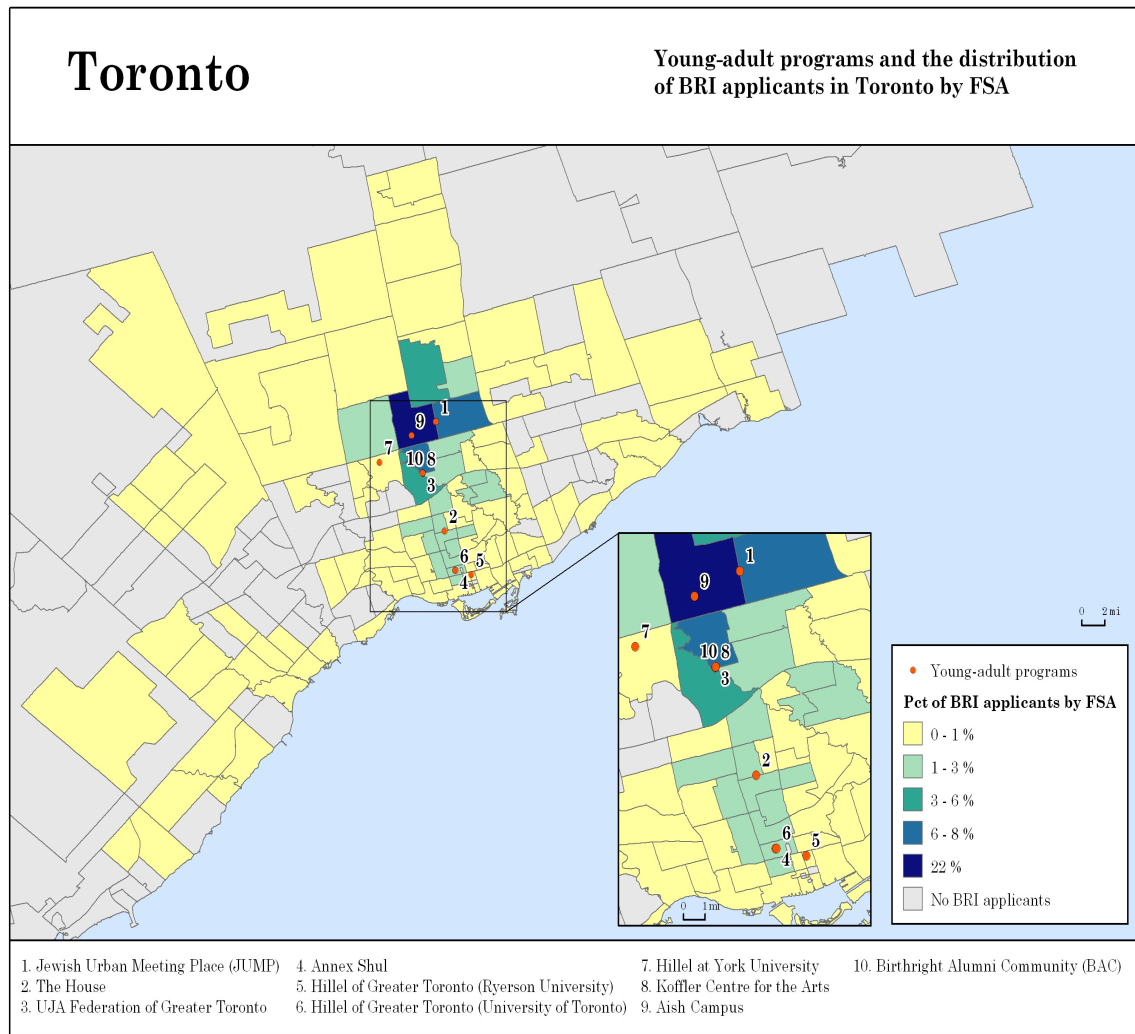




WG884 L. Skahen, December 2008. Brandeis University. Sources: US Census Bureau, Birthright Israel.



WGS84 L. Skahan, December 2008. Brandeis University. Sources: US Census Bureau, Birthright Israel.



WGS84 L. Skahen, January 2009. Brandeis University. Sources: US Census Bureau, Birthright Israel.

Appendix D: Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

Welcome to the Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni focus group. My name is [name] and I am a researcher working with the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University in Massachusetts. We are conducting research on the experiences of Taglit-Birthright Israel alumni in their home communities. This research is funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation and by the [name of local funder].

[Distribute Briefing Sheet]

As you know participation in this study is completely voluntary. We hope that you will participate fully and honestly but you are also free to pass on any questions that you choose not to answer. Whatever you share with us in this focus group will be treated confidentially.

In order to encourage open and honest exchange it is also important that participants treat what is discussed in this group as confidential. Information and opinions shared in the group are not to be published or distributed by group participants.

We will be taping this discussion so that we have a complete record of what you say but no one outside of the Cohen Center research team will have access to that tape. Information from this study will only be reported in ways that do not identify individuals. Our discussion will last about 75 minutes. Are there any questions?

Let's begin by finding out more about who you are and where you are in your life right now.

1. Let's go around the group and if each of you could share your name and a brief description of your current situation. What are you doing? What do you really care about or what are you really involved in right now?

2. You are all Birthright Israel alumni. How well have you kept in touch with people you met on the trip?

How about the Israelis you met?

In what ways have you stayed in touch, e.g., Facebook, meeting, email?

3. Some people return from a Birthright trip energized to continue their connection to Israel, to their Jewish identity or to their local Jewish community. Others don't feel much different. What was your experience when you returned?

4. What, if anything, have you done to stay connected to Israel, to your Jewish identity, or to your local Jewish community? Have those efforts worked in the way you hoped?

5. Since your trip which, if any, organizations or programs have reached out to you or invited you

to participate in alumni activities or activities for young adult Jews in general? Have you participated in any of those programs and what was your experience?

6. I am going to hand out a list of programs and events for young adult Jews that are offered in the [city] metropolitan area.

Which of these have you heard about? What have you heard?

Which ones have you tried? What was it like?

What have you tried that is not on the list?

7. Thinking about the programs or events you have not tried or would not go back to what is it about those programs that doesn't work for you?

How well do the locations and times work for you?

Does it matter if your friends are involved?

How well do you think you will fit in?

Are you finding programs that interest you?

8. Are there more informal ways in which your Jewish life gets played out, for example with your friends or in your neighborhood?

Where do you go in the area or in your community to just hang out with or meet other young adult Jews?

Any Jewish Facebook pages that you belong to?

9. Do you consider yourself a member of the [city] Jewish community? What does that mean to you?

10. If you could design the perfect Jewish or post-Birthright programming specifically for yourself and your friends what would it look like?

Would it connect to other interests?

Where and when would it take place?

Who else would be involved?



The Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University is a multi-disciplinary research institute dedicated to the study of American Jewry and the development of religious and cultural identity.

Brandeis University



Maurice *and* Marilyn Cohen
Center *for* Modern Jewish Studies